

2/BRIEFING

COLUMN ONE

Life in the fast lane 'is cruel to mice'

The notion of an Irishman banning racing sounds absurd. On learning that he is referring to mice racing, it sounds even more absurd.

Billy Kelleher, a Fianna Fail main government party representative, is leading calls for a nation-wide ban on that little-known sport involving placing a bet on a mouse. Seeing how the rodents run is, he says, nothing short of cruel.

Mr Kelleher made his demand following reports that Galway's University College in Cork had provided runners from its laboratory for a mouse-racing festival. He branded the festival, which is being staged this weekend in the Co Galway village of Ballymacward, "a Mickey Mouse event" and urged its cancellation. "The university should maintain its squeaky-clean image," he said. "Providing mice for a racing festival hardly enhances it. In fact, it damages Ireland's national image. I was surprised that the university should agree to provide mice for the festival, even if it was for fund-raising purposes. It is cruel, and an alternative should be considered."

Mice racing may sound silly, but apparently it is a lot of fun. So much so that seven years ago two Americans, Harvey Coffee, 64, and Bob Dobbins, 63, set up "Gateway Downs Mouse Racing" in St Louis. "My wife thinks I'm a little crazy, but she goes along with it," said Mr Coffee, who breeds the domestic mice in a barn near his home. They take the mice on tour, doing shows at schools, churches and halls. The track is 12 feet long and instead of circuits there are "dashes". The favourite is, of course, "Big Cheese."

Mr Coffee's and Mr Dobbins's mice-racing venture is so popular that it is booked up six months in advance. To help newcomers to mice racing, they publish a racing programme called the *Racing Daily News*, which provides statistics on each mouse's racing history and comments such as "looking for roses" and "hasn't shown much". Most patrons, however, do not study the form closely, but prefer to go by the names.

A night out with the mice usually includes six or seven races, which are run about 20 minutes apart. Mr Coffee, who used to dance at a certain Casa Loma Ballroom, begins each race by opening one of the "paddock cages" and pulling out a mouse by its tail. He dances back and forth, dangling the mouse by its tail before putting it into a starting gate.

And Mr Kelleher says this sport is cruel ... — Clare Garner

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.44	Italy (lira)	2,844
Austria (schillings)	20.05	Japan (yen)	212.97
Belgium (francs)	58.96	Malta (lira)	0.62
Canada (\$)	2.32	Netherlands (guilders)	3.21
Cyprus (pounds)	0.83	Norway (kroner)	11.78
Denmark (kroner)	10.94	Portugal (escudos)	289.69
France (francs)	9.54	Spain (pesetas)	240.73
Germany (marks)	2.86	Sweden (kroner)	12.59
Greece (drachmas)	453.96	Switzerland (francs)	2.31
Hong Kong (\$)	12.47	Turkey (lira)	327.339
Ireland (punts)	1.11	USA (\$)	1.62

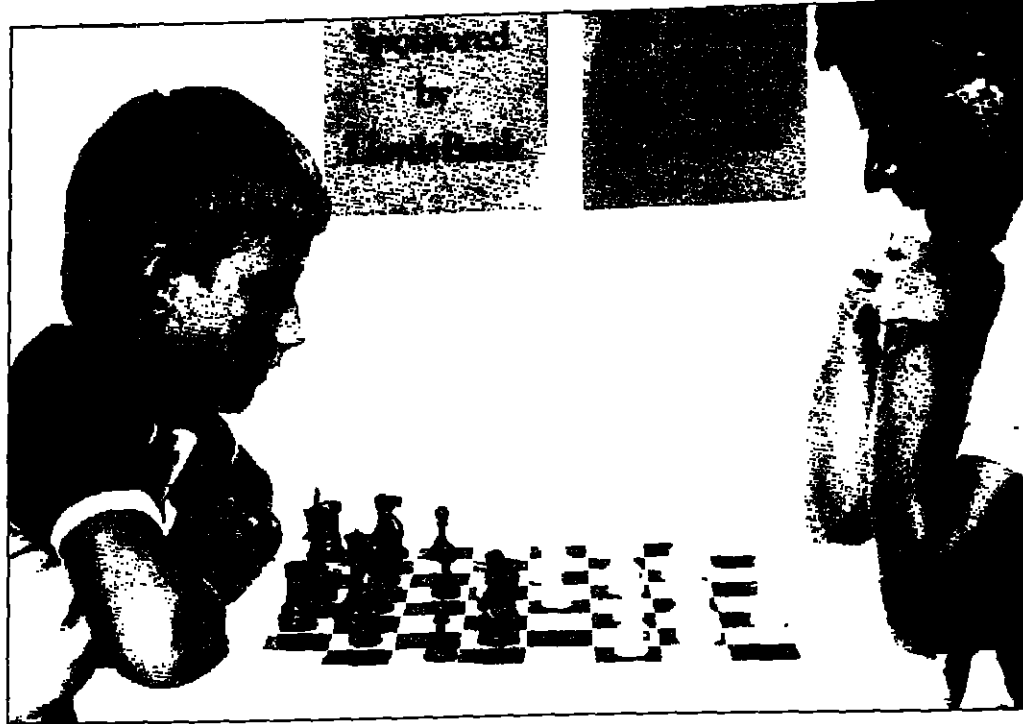
Source: Thomas Cook
Rates as on 24 December 1997, for indicative purposes only

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NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING
Recycled paper made up 41.4% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1997.

PEOPLE



Rising star: Michael Adams as a 12-year-old playing the former world champion Boris Spassky

Adams moves to the fore in chess showdown

An era ended on Christmas Day when Nigel Short, Britain's leading chess player for the last 10 years, was knocked out of the World Chess Championship by Michael Adams, the heir apparent to the British grandmaster's throne.

Short was defeated by Adams in the International Chess Federation (Fide) championships in Groningen, in the Netherlands.

Adams, 26, now meets the man who began as favourite for the event. Between now and the end of this year, he will play a four-game match against the Indian grandmaster Viswanathan Anand.

They last met in a World Title qualifier three years ago when Anand, who is now 28, won by the impressive margin of 5½ to 1½. But in those days, Adams was only Britain's second best player. The next few days will be a good indication of how much he has improved. Whoever wins will still have to overcome Anatoly Karpov, the reigning Fide champion, in a match for the title.

But even that will not be the final hurdle. For the world's number one player, Garry Kasparov, refused to participate in the current event. As soon as this event is over, negotiations will surely begin for a showdown match to establish who really is the best chess player in the world.

Short had enjoyed the fruits of his position at the pinnacle of British chess since 1993, when he qualified for a World Title match against Garry Kasparov. By comparison, his results since then have been disappointing, but he had returned to his best form in the World Championship which was run, for the first time, as a series of two-game knockout matches.

After eliminating several players rated higher than himself, Short came up against Michael Adams in the semi-finals of the eliminators. After losing the first game, he came back with an impressive equalising win. By the rules of the competition, they then had to play two games in which each player started with only 25 minutes thinking time on his clock. With considerable prize money (£220,000 to the winner) as well as reputations at stake, both men played cautiously and both games were drawn. They then moved on to two games at 15 minutes each. Two more careful draws. The final tie split was a play-off in which White (who has the advantage of moving first) starts with five minutes while Black has six. Suddenly Adams changed strategy and adopted what looked like a risky attacking plan with the black pieces. It paid off beautifully, and Short resigned the game and the match as Adams' attack broke through.

— William Hartston

America's favourite comic leaves the stage

Jerry Seinfeld, the New York stand-up comic who created and gave his name to the most-watched show in the history of American television, is calling it quits. The decision, he says, is all about timing.

After nine seasons of making *Seinfeld*, the comedian and his colleagues told the NBC network that they will be making their last episode next May. Thus will end a sitcom that will take its place on the pantheon of television comedy gems alongside the likes of *MASH*, *Cheers* and *I Love Lucy*. "I wanted to end the show on the same kind of peak we've been doing it for years," Seinfeld told yesterday's *New York Times*. "I wanted the end to be from a point of strength."

While *Seinfeld* is currently the

second most popular television show in the United States during this last season it became the most watched show ever produced by the industry. In many ways, it became a signpost for Nineties East Coast culture and society.

Its demise is a disaster for NBC. The network was reportedly already paying Seinfeld at least \$1m (£617,000) per episode. After acrimonious negotiations last spring, it agreed to give his main co-stars, playing Elaine, George and the barmy, hair-style impaired, neighbour, Kramer, \$600,000 each per show.

Seinfeld, set in Manhattan, each week alighted on one seemingly trifling challenge of urban life — such as exiting a supermarket and not being able to find the car or the

terms of being a horrible dancer — and turned it into 30 minutes of killing hilarity.

Among phrases that were spoken first on *Seinfeld* and then entered the everyday lexicon were "Yada, yada, yada" (roughly "bla, bla, bla"), and "Not that there's anything wrong with that".

NBC was said yesterday to offered Mr Seinfeld something around \$5m a show to keep it in production beyond next spring, but money was apparently not the main issue. "It was an extremely difficult thing to do. This show has been the greatest love affair of my life," Seinfeld said. "But we were all together on it. We all felt we wanted to leave in love."

— David Osborne, *New York*

UPDATE

PETS

Abandoned dogs on the increase

Dozens of dogs have been abandoned on Britain's streets over Christmas. The number of strays arriving at Britain's leading home for abandoned dogs has increased steadily since Christmas Eve. Staff are working round the clock to care for unwanted Christmas pets at Battersea Dogs' Home in south London, which has housed 33 animals left to roam the city's streets over the past three days — 8 per cent more than last year.

A total of 706 abandoned dogs are at present at the centre and the spokesman Stephen Danos said he expects this figure to increase over as the festive season. "What is worrying is that if the number of stray dogs in the home is up now, just a few days into Christmas, what will it be like in late January?" he said. "On the whole older dogs are being abandoned, perhaps being displaced by a new puppy."

The 137-year-old sanctuary for abandoned dogs saw nine new arrivals on Christmas Eve, a dozen more on Christmas Day and another 12 by mid-afternoon today. A struggling fox terrier rescued from the icy waters of the River Thames was among the first Christmas strays to arrive at Battersea on Christmas Day. It was rescued by a passer-by who waded in to save it and then took it to the home.

The RSPCA last night urged pet owners to be more responsible as workers brace themselves for the number of strays to increase in the New Year.

LAW & ORDER

Academics to check out bouncers



Burly bouncers are to be the target of undercover academics as part of a new study in which researchers will lift the lid on the burgeoning economy in the private policing of pubs and clubs.

Dr Dick Hobbs, a criminologist of Durham University, has been given £116,000 from the Economic and Social Research Fund to try to find out what makes bouncers tick and how revellers are controlled. Lifeline, the Manchester-based drug support and information agency, will also help with the study. Dr Hobbs said: "Sanctioned violence, or the threat of violence, from paid thugs is the usual method of controlling the potentially volatile atmosphere at venues. There is this world which we walk past but we don't know what goes on." The study, *The Art and Economics of Intimidation*, will look at the options available to establishment owners and try to find the best way to police drinkers, and, increasingly, drug users. An undercover academic will take up a job as a bouncer in the North East. Similar jobs may also be sought in the North West, London and elsewhere. Dr Hobbs has carried out a number of undercover studies into Britain's criminal underworld and has had books and articles published about his work.

THE DEMON DRINK

Demand for alcohol 'drying up'

A record number of people could be giving up drinking in the New Year, a temperance society has claimed. The Rechabites Friendly Society, founded more than 160 years ago to offer financial policies and services to people who abstain from alcohol, said temperance was making a comeback. Its chief executive William Turnbull said: "We are seeing substantial growth in the number of people abstaining from alcohol and this manifests itself in increased demand for our products over the past few years. Our membership currently stands at more than 28,000 and is expanding steadily."

He said there were now more than a million non-drinking adults in the UK. One of the places with the highest rates of abstinence was Scotland. Andy Willis, executive director of the British National Temperance League, said: "Temperance is growing in popularity, especially among the 25 to 34 age group where numbers abstaining from alcohol have more than doubled in the past 17 years."

POLITICS

Festive cheer for Hamilton

After a year with little to celebrate, Neil Hamilton has received some cheering Christmas news — he has finally managed to beat Martin Bell at the polls. The disgraced former trade minister came third in an award for the male politician of the year, and Mr Bell came fourth.

A poll of 800 customers at Poliboo's bookshop in London, many of them MPs, placed him beneath only Tony Blair and Gordon Brown for the man of the year title. The Prime Minister came top, and the chancellor second, Michael Portillo was fifth while William Hague managed only ninth place with 4 per cent of the vote. There was good news, too, for Mr Hamilton's wife Christine: she swept the board in the "Parliamentary secretary of the year" category, with hundreds of nominations. Last night Mr Hamilton said he was delighted. "I can only put it down to the news coverage which *The Independent* gave to me," he said. Harriet Harman was ranked "Worst Labour minister," with 51 per cent of the vote, while Peter Mandelson came second.

ZITS

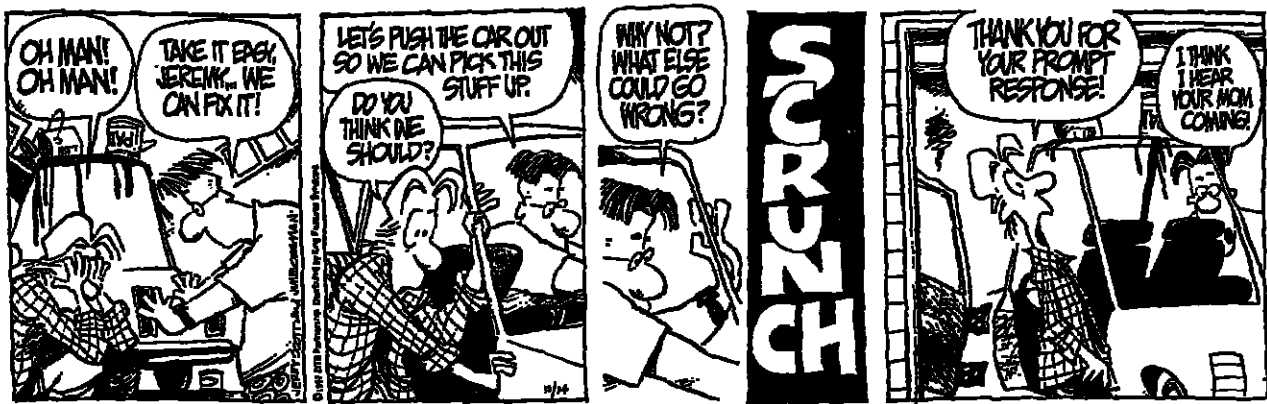
by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

Labour attacked by guru

A political thinker credited with having a profound influence on new Labour, criticised the Government yesterday for cutting lone parents' benefits without first showing that work was available for them. Amatai Etzioni, the founder of Communitarianism, has met Tony Blair. He is said to have influenced the new wording of Clause Four of Labour's Constitution, which replaced nationalisation with a statement that "the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe".

Interviewed on BBC Radio yesterday, Professor Etzioni, who is based at George Washington University in the United States, suggested that the decision to cut benefits was "not very communitarian". "The notion of getting people off before there is real, solid evidence that we have provided them with work or opportunities to find work, is too punitive ... we don't have the evidence that work will be available."

— Fran Abrams



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free across a wide area. And whatever you buy, you can return it if you are not completely satisfied. The John Lewis Clearance. It's better than a sale.



Bargain-hunters: Shoppers queuing yesterday at a designer clothing factory outlet in Oxford Street, central London, where prices were cut by up to 75 per cent. Photograph: Rui Xavier

Record sales bargains attract record turnout

Britons had barely digested their turkey before they started queuing outside stores in order to get a headstart in the sales. From 6am yesterday – three hours before stores opened – consumers were standing on pavements preparing to descend on the biggest January sales in years. It was a record turnout, for record reductions.

The House of Fraser department store in Glasgow usually expects around two dozen early birds. "There were around 60 shoppers and we had to open all our doors instead of just the usual main door," a spokesman said. "A lot of our merchandise has discounts of up to 50 per cent." Card holders will receive an extra 10 per cent off purchases.

Marks & Spencer, BHS and Habitat are among those who start their sales today. Thomson's, Britain's largest tour operator, is also having a sale from today, with savings of up to £100 per person for summer holidays booked in January. Those wanting to bargain hunt at Harrods will have to wait until 7 January, when the singer Cher will launch the sale.

at 10am prompt. Transactions were not just on interest-free credit either, according to Roger Handley, the store's marketing director. "There's definitely a lot of cash credit around," he said. Among the most popular purchases there was a 6ft wide bed reduced from £999 to £499, with an additional £50 knocked off because it is being sold a new store.

Keen gardeners in Bristol queued for an hour outside the department store, Gardiner Haskins, to beat the rush to the popular seed stand. Packs of vegetable and flower seeds had been reduced from around £3 to just 15p. Allan Weeks, 57, a van driver at the front of the queue, said: "I have come here every year for four years. It is like an annual pilgrimage."

The Bristol branch of Curry's had knocked up to £200 off computers, £120 off fridges and £100 off video recorders. Sony Playstation computer game consoles are so popular that they did not have to be reduced. "We had totally sold out before Christmas, but now we have restocked and they are in such demand we don't need to put them in the sales," said deputy manager, John O'Connor. Several stores carried notices from Sony apologising for the lack of stock.

Computer world struggles to bridge comprehension gap

Computer programmers really are nerds who are turning the rest of us into computer anoraks too, according to new research. As thousands of children and their parents struggle with the instructions of their Christmas computer, Louise Jury investigates reasons for the difficulty.

So at last you are joining the electronic age. Santa delivered a computer and you have been sitting there since Christmas lunch trying to fathom it out. It is not working. Somewhere along the line there is a major comprehension gap. This may not be your fault.

Dr Paul Nightingale, of Sussex University, says the problem is that the people who make technology know about technology by definition. They do not understand those of us who

do not. "Their perception of the problem they are solving is very different," he said. "You need a certain kind of mathematical genius to juggle the ideas to make elegant [software] designs. But brilliant minds aren't very good at ordinary things like washing and shopping. They are what you could call very loosely coupled to reality."

They don't understand that secretaries might want to stop for a chat, because they do everything by e-mail. Take Bill Gates, founder of the Microsoft company and now a billionaire whose hobby is attending physics lectures – Robert X Cringely, describes him thus in his book, *Accidental Empires: How the boys of Silicon Valley make their million*. "The second most important woman in Bill

Gates' life is probably his housekeeper, with whom he communicates mainly through a personal graphical user interface – a large white board that sits in Gates' bedroom... Bill can communicate his need for dinner at 8 or for a new pair of socks (brown), all without having to speak or be seen."

Dr Nightingale, whose research at Sussex's Complex Product Systems Innovation Centre is aimed at trying to overcome this problem, said

Gates is not alone. Computer obsessives were more than happy to avoid traditional human contact. "And they programme their perception of work into their computers." Effectively, this forces the rest of us to behave like a computer nerd too. We have to think like them to use their software.

Perils and pitfalls that await the unwary on the World Wide Web

If, after much tweaking of wires and banging of keys, you've finally got the computer you bought for Christmas connected to the Internet, congratulations – your problems are just beginning. Charles Arthur, Science Editor, on what to beware when you're surfing.

latest frauds – some very subtle – being perpetrated on the Net. They include sending people e-mail telling them that a bill is outstanding, and that the recipient must ring a number or else the bailiffs will be calling. The bill is fake – but the phone number connects to a recording in the Caribbean, with charges which can be up to £10 per minute. One of these companies used its connection through a British company, Demon Internet, and sent e-mails to thousands of Americans telling them to call a number prefixed with the code "809". While most ignored it, some did call and found themselves listening to a slow recording telling them their call would soon be dealt with. Demon cut the company off and is considering taking further action.

But those who have just logged on have one advantage: the people who send out such e-mail – known as junk e-mail, or more colloquially, "spam" (after the Monty Python sketch) – do not have your address yet. They can usually only get it if

it appears in a Web page, or if you type it in to a Web page, or if you post your normal address in one of the thousands of discussion groups, or "newsgroups". Anyone considering doing that should look first at the information offered by the Scambusters on avoiding letting the "spammers" get your address – for once they have it, they will relentlessly send you details of pyramid schemes (illegal in the US and UK), multi-level marketing schemes (which are guaranteed to fail), and wonder products and share tips which will generally do exactly the opposite of what is forecast for them.

Another wrinkle to watch for is sites or e-mails which ask for your credit card or bank details. A number of Californians have recently been contacted with offers to take part in the "Nigerian bank" fraud – except they aren't told it is a fraud. The message says there is a huge amount of money for which they want to use your account as a stop-off place, offering you a cut. In fact, if you give out your

details, any flow of money will be out of your account, not in. Yet the problem of "spam", both in newsgroups and e-mail, continues to grow. There are an estimated 13 million pieces of junk e-mail sent every day – each one imposing its cost on the receiver, rather than the sender. The problem is worse with news postings. According to DejaNews, a US company based in Austin, Texas, which archives newsgroup postings, there are about 730,000 new "posts" every day, taking roughly 5,000 Mb (5 gigabytes) of storage – yet two-thirds of that is either "spam" (including pyramid schemes) or messages sent by systems administrators trying to remove those unwanted messages from the system.

"Newsgroups are a tremendous source of information and exchange used by over 24 million people around the world," said Guy Hoffman, head of Deja News. "Unfortunately, a small number of individuals and companies are abusing the Usenet to the detriment of everyone else."

For those who have barely stumbled onto the World Wide Web, a vital first stop may be a site run by a husband-and-wife team in the town of Olney, Maryland. Called Scambusters, and located at <http://www.scambusters.org> it is dedicated to warning newcomers about the

BBC romps home in festive ratings battle

The BBC1 comedy *Men Behaving Badly* attracted 15.5 million viewers, making it the most popular Christmas Day television show, the BBC said yesterday. The programme, screened at 10.30pm, involved a catalogue of Yuletide disasters for flatmates Gary and Tony, played by Martin Clunes and Neil Morrissey. Their antics beat the grumbings of Victor Meldrew (actor Richard Wilson) in BBC1's *One Foot In The Grave*, which had 15.1 million viewers.

Some 12.4 million people tuned in to *EastEnders*, with the comedy sporting quiz *They Think It's All Over* close behind on 12 million viewers, according to provisional figures released by the BBC. The television premiere of the Jim Carey film *The Mask*, also on BBC1, attracted 9.9 million viewers. The Queen's Speech was watched by 8.2 million people on BBC and 3.8 million on ITV. On ITV, the highest viewing figure was 12.6 million people for *Coronation Street*.

Its second biggest attraction was an hour-long episode of *Emmerdale*, which attracted 9.4 million. The BBC spent £42m on its Christmas schedule this year. It traditionally invests more than ITV and it normally wins the ratings battle at Christmas hands down. Last year, for example, BBC1 alone accounted for 54 per cent of all Christmas

Day viewing – more than twice the proportion of those who watched ITV. The corporation invests so heavily at this time of year because the ratings victory it gets at Christmas picks up its average audience share for the year as a whole. It also knows that ITV is unlikely to invest so heavily because advertisers like to advertise in the run-up to Christmas before people do their Christmas shopping. There is a marked difference in the price of air time during the last two weeks of December compared with the first weeks, says Mike Gorman, media director of Saatchi and Saatchi. "It happens because the gift

advertisers, the drinks, chocolates, fragrances and so on, want to get on air from mid-November when purchasing decisions are being made. By mid-December it is all over for them and they stop advertising."

There is also a feeling that at times of big national events, from the World Cup Finals to Royal Weddings, and including Christmas, the nation tends to turn to the BBC. "It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy," says Mr Gorman. "There is no intrinsic reason why ITV cannot take on the BBC. But they seem to think they'll lose the ratings battle so they don't schedule their best stuff which in turn makes sure they do lose the battle."

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Saboteurs accused of poisoning

A fortnight ago masked activists set about hunt supporters with baseball bats and iron bars. Yesterday they allegedly poisoned the hounds. Ian Burrell says the incident spoilt an unexpected atmosphere of seasonal goodwill on hunting's busiest day.

The "Antis" had come to protect the fox. The police who stood between them and rival hunt supporters were there to stop the two-legged creatures tearing each other to pieces.

But by the end of the most important day in the hunting programme the chief concern was not for fox or human but for seven dogs lying stricken with poison.

The hounds, from among the Tredegar Farmers' Pack in Gwent, had allegedly been deliberately targeted by renegade hunt saboteurs. The accusation was promptly and angrily denied by hunt protesters, who said no animal-lover would do such a thing.

But David Mills, spokesman for the British Field Sports Society in Wales, was unrepentant. "It is absolutely appalling. These people simply do not care about animals. I would just like to be able to show them the dogs," he said. "The vet has said one is going to die. It was in a coma and has stomach contractions and is vomiting."

Earlier in the day, activists had come in their thousands to protest against blood sports and, against expectations, no blood was spilt.

Police fears of violence were based on clashes a fortnight ago at the Hursley and Hambledon Hunt when three people were injured and 42 arrested after hooded activists carrying wooden staves and metal bars attacked hunt supporters and wrecked their cars.

Yesterday, however, the supporters of the inedible were prepared to speak to the unspeakable, albeit in distinctly unrepentant language.

At Maldon, Essex, where 300 people gathered for the start of the hunt, Chief Inspector Dennis Reusch was

impressed with the degree of courtesy extended. "It's a very contentious political issue at the moment and the demonstration was noisy and passionate, which is what we expected," he said. "I'm aware of no violence and I don't think anyone overstepped the mark."

Among the protesters was Angela Smith, Labour MP for Basildon and Thurrock. "I'd like to think that this will be the last Boxing Day when we see hunts taking place across the country," she said. "But I think, being realistic, it will take longer than a year to outlaw hunting, because of the opposition we will face in the House of Lords."

The future of hunting is under threat from Michael Foster MP's Wild Mammals (Hunting with Dogs) Bill, which is unlikely to succeed. However, Tony Blair has indicated that the Government will allow another opportunity for a ban to become law within two years.

Among the more famous of the 280 hunts taking place yesterday were the Belvoir, Berkeley, and Quorn.

Staghound, harrier, beagle and draghound meetings also took place.

The Prince of Wales, who often rides with the Beaufort hunt, was expected to miss the meeting in order to take part in the traditional Boxing Day partridge and pheasant shoot on the Sandringham estate in Norfolk.

The large turn-out at many of the hunts yesterday prompted supporters to claim further evidence of widespread opposition to Mr Foster's bill.

But the MP saw it differently. "This proves that it is not a pest-control method but entertainment," he said.

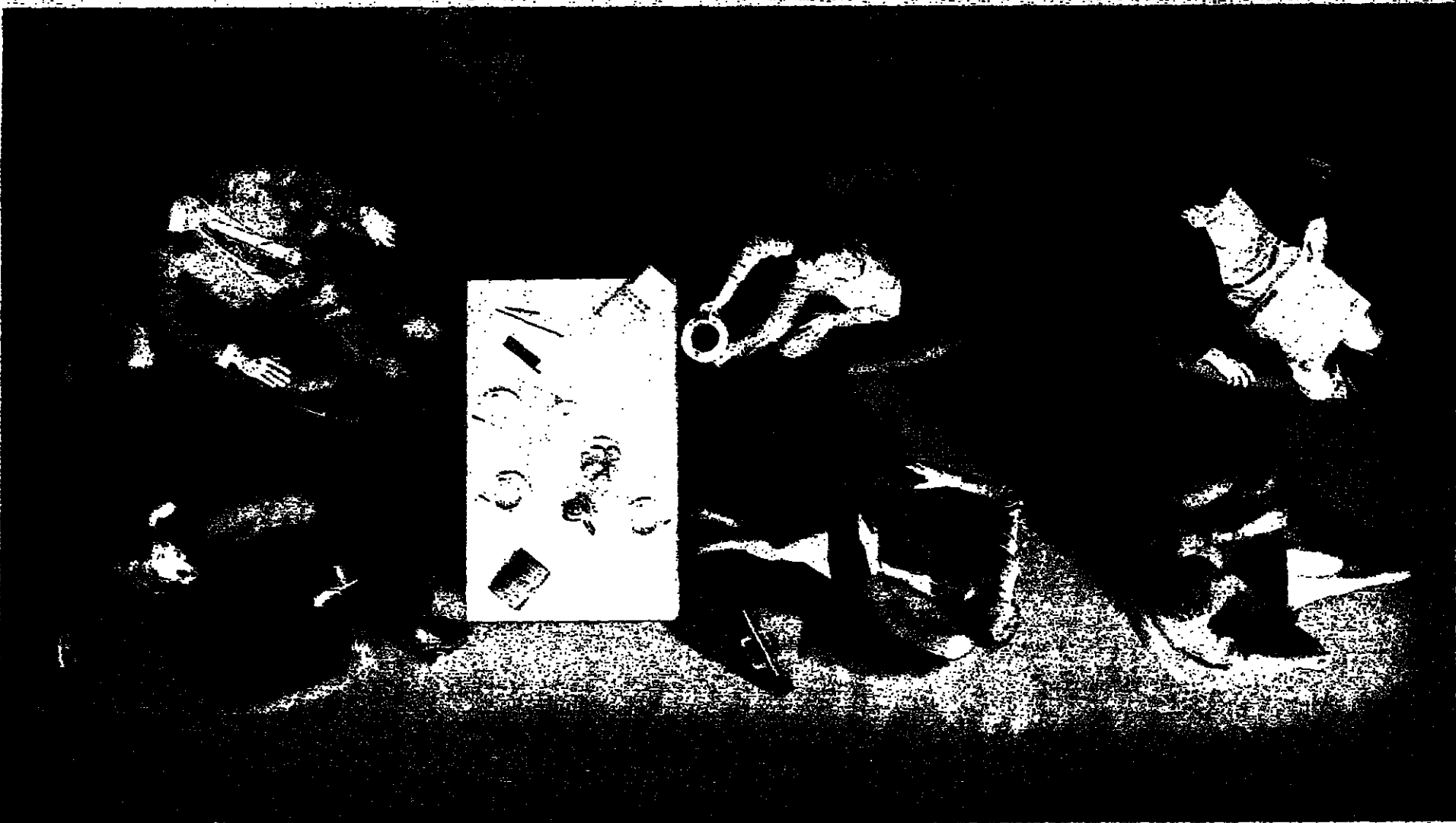
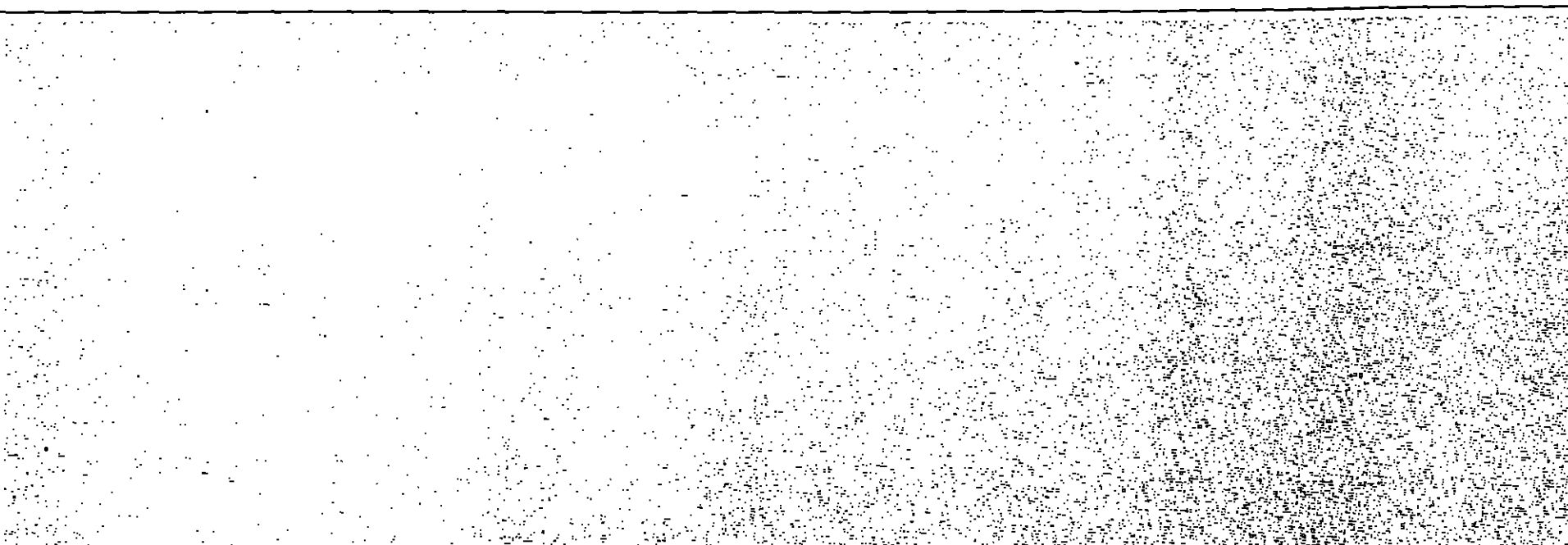
Despite the fate of the Tredegar hounds, the two sides seemed determined to show some Christmas spirit.

Kevin Saunders, of the League Against Cruel Sports, said: "Everything has gone off peacefully, without people getting out of control."

Pamela Morton, of the British Field Sports Society, said 3,000 had turned out to support the hunts. "All things considered, it has been a good day, without any serious trouble. The hunting was good too, as it was not frosty," she added.



Hounded out: The Quorn hunt at Ashby Folville, Leicestershire, yesterday, when the main casualties on the most important day in the hunting programme were neither foxes nor humans, but dogs. Photograph: Raymonds



Is this room really travelling at sixty miles an hour?

"Would you like another top-up?", our congenial host enquired. Smiling, I held out my near-empty coffee cup across the table. Sitting face to face also allowed the conversation to continually flow, as the Mercedes V-class effortlessly wended its way toward our destination. Stretching out, I had to remind myself that our luggage was securely stored behind us.

From the corner of an eye, I noticed the verdant scenery blur by like the brushstrokes of an impressionist painting. Although, if truth be told, the whole experience seemed slightly more surreal. After all, who has ever heard of a room travelling along at a steady sixty miles an hour?

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Katie Lees protesting in Crewkerne, Somerset, where the Seavinton foxhounds meet. Photograph: Richard Austin

THE INDEPENDENT GET MIXING! WIN A J&B RARE MIX KIT

How do you mix your social life? Perhaps you're into rock and Opera or football and art galleries? According to a European survey by J&B Rare, Brits are busy in Europe, living their social life to the full often mixing fitness, shopping and clubbing all in the same day.

95% of Brits would think nothing of going to a restaurant, playing sport, mixing a trip to the country and visiting an art gallery in a single weekend. Stuffed as mixing their social activities in their spare time, Brits also love to mix their style. They dress to impress - combining high street with designer.

We have teamed up with J&B Rare to offer 10 readers the chance to win a Rare mix kit, and 100 runners-up a J&B Rare miniature and can of Ginger Ale.

The kit includes a stylish watch, a fleece to wear for outdoor pursuits, a long glass, a swizzle stick, a J&B Rare miniature and a can of Ginger Ale to stimulate the taste buds.

To enter this competition dial the number below, answer the following question on line and leave your name and full address, and also stating that you are over 18 years old.

Q: What percentage of Britons like to mix their social life?

Call 0930 525224

Calls cost 50p per minute at all times. Winner picked at random after 11pm close 30 December 1997. Usual Newspaper Publishing rules apply. Editor's decision is final.

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Foreign Office opens secret files on the Cold War spies

The dramatic secret consultations that led to the expulsion of 105 Soviet spies in 1971 are to be released by the Foreign Office in advance of the 30-year rule in an unprecedented gesture of 'open government'.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) historians have had access to intelligence documents and official papers to write the history of East-West relations at the height of the Cold War. It is the first time since the Second World War that a government has allowed the publication of any inside information in advance of the rule which blocks the release of papers for at least 30 years.

Among the files are details of how, in 1971, the new Tory administration under Edward Heath decided to get tough over the scale of Soviet intelligence activity in Britain, and an attack on Henry Kissinger, the United States Secretary of State.

Many of the files will remain unavailable to the public. But where the information is no longer regarded as a threat to intelligence operations or to international relations, correspondence and memoranda will be released verbatim - in two volumes, with a historical context provided by the FCO historians.

A previously confidential memorandum to the then Prime Minister, Edward Heath, from Sir Alec Douglas-Home, then Foreign Secretary, and Reginald Maudling, then Home Secretary, in July 1971, laid out in detail the problem of Soviet spying in Britain. They concluded that there were at least 120 intelligence agents in Britain and the total could exceed 200.

The various Soviet establishments, including the em-

EXCLUSIVE
BY LOUISE
JURY

bassy, the trade delegation and the Moscow Narodny Bank, employed more than 500 people between them, making the Soviet delegation to Britain the largest of any country in Western Europe. The memo concluded that if the Soviet delegation to the United Nations was excluded, there were more Russians in Britain than even in the United States.

The volumes also detail the Soviet reaction, much less extreme than had been feared.



Heath (left), tough on spies, and Kissinger, under attack

There was, though, a freezing of relations and the Moscow establishment made life very difficult and confusing for the new British ambassador in Moscow, Sir John Killick.

In an appeal to the FCO for information to help him in his new post, he was left intrigued by the workings of Soviet intelligence. Apparently baffled, he asked "whether the KGB, for all their resources and efficiency, are out of their minds?"

The papers are expected to give details of the revelations of Oleg Lyalin, a KGB defector to Britain in 1971, who admitted he was responsible for plans to sabotage a radar station in North Yorkshire, built to give

early warning of a Soviet nuclear missile attack.

Other areas likely to be covered include Gerald Brooke, a businessman falsely held on spying charges in Moscow and eventually released in exchange for the Krogers - Jewish-Americans whose real names were Morris and Lona Cohen. The Krogers were originally involved in the Rosenberg spy ring which was responsible for stealing atomic bomb secrets from the United States in the early Fifties.

The papers will also make it clear that Britain remained highly suspicious of the alleged US detente with the Soviet Union. They reported that Dr Kissinger had come to see the ground-breaking Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in Helsinki as a "positive obstacle to his task of developing Soviet-American co-operation".

They feared he was influenced by the Watergate affair and willing to stop putting the Soviets under pressure on human rights in order to achieve the US's own ends. Diplomats noted of Kissinger: "He often gives the impression that detente is primarily a matter of inter-governmental accommodation and that the human aspect is secondary."

The volumes of papers are to be launched at a special "witness seminar" which is expected to be attended by key international figures of the era. Lord Callaghan, the former prime minister; Lord Healey, former defence secretary; senior Foreign Office diplomats; and one-time heads of the intelligence services are among those invited to what is being regarded as an unprecedented gathering. Yuri Fokine, the Russian ambassador who was personal assistant to Andrei Gromyko as Soviet foreign secretary, has already indicated his enthusiasm to take part.



On the trail: Phil Sterling, moths officer for Butterfly Conservation, tracking the Blair's wainscot (below) in Dorset. Main photograph: Richard Lappas



Blair's namesake is making a comeback

A two-inch moth, thought to have been extinct for the last 50 years, has reappeared. The *Sedna buettneri* moth, otherwise known as Blair's wainscot, has had a fate seemingly tied to politics. It was first identified in Britain by a retired beetle expert at the British Museum, Dr K G Blair in 1946, just after Clement Attlee's landslide Labour victory. Then it was declared extinct in 1950, the year before the Conservatives were re-elected under Winston Churchill.

The Blair's wainscot was sighted in a secluded Dorset river valley, Butterfly Conser-

vation, which made the find, is keen to keep its exact location secret for fear that thousands of collectors will descend on the valley, destroying the moth's only known habitat.

Labour-voting moth lovers claim that the delicate pink streaks on the Blair's Wainscot are evidence of its left-wing credentials, perhaps particularly appropriate as Labour has just emerged from years in the wilderness.

It is not clear whether the moth, which faces an uncertain future, will be a talisman for Labour's new year.

— Katherine Griffiths.

Minister's son in cannabis case could get 'fast-track' justice

The Government faced criticism from its own back bench yesterday as it emerged that a cabinet minister's son arrested for allegedly supplying cannabis could be rushed through 'fast-track' prosecution procedures. *Fran Abrams, Political Correspondent, examines a growing controversy.*

The Crown Prosecution Service could make an early decision on whether to charge the 17-year-old, it emerged yesterday. A fast-track procedure, which was meant to be for persistent offenders, might be used.

Although the minister concerned has not commented on the matter, it became clear that he persuaded his son to make a statement to the police after a newspaper investigation. The boy was said to have given information on his own supplier, and two of his friends were expected to be questioned. This swift action ensured that he could not be named under laws covering juveniles, and should also help his case for lenient treatment.

Paul Flynn, the Labour MP for Newport West, and vice-chairman of the Commons Drugs Misuse Group, said the use of fast-tracking would be wrong in this case.

"To do this to avoid embarrassment to a minister would be an abuse of the system," he said. "If the minister has got some responsibility for the law, for example if he is in the Lord

Chancellor's or Attorney General's Department or the Home Office, he is going to be in a very difficult position."

The boy should be treated in exactly the same way as any other 17-year-old first-time offender, he added.

The Government has consistently taken a hard line on drugs. Earlier this week, the Home Office minister, George Howarth criticised an *Independent on Sunday* campaign for the legalisation of cannabis, dismissing it as self-justification by middle-class journalists who took the drug themselves.

In October, Tony Blair rejected calls for a change in the law on drugs after being asked

to comment on the case of a 19-year-old sent to prison for 13 months after a first offence of supplying ecstasy to friends. The Prime Minister's response was that he should be "severely punished".

It emerged yesterday that the minister contacted Downing Street and then took his son to a police station after being telephoned by the editor of the *Daily Mirror*, Piers Morgan. Two reporters had apparently spoken to the teenager in a London pub on Saturday night and had claimed they bought 2 grams of cannabis from him for £10.

After being telephoned by Mr Morgan, the minister spoke to his son and then informed the

Prime Minister's office. At 6pm on Monday he accompanied the teenager to a police station where he made a statement.

The fact that proceedings have been instituted against the boy means he cannot be named. Under the Children and Young Persons' Act of 1933, no newspaper report of proceedings in a youth court may identify the accused.

Although "fast-tracking" procedures in the Crime and Disorder Bill will not become law until the summer, a number of police forces already use them. They are designed to reduce the average time from arrest to sentence from around 140 days to 70.

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The Bard's words that could unlock life's secrets

'For in that sleep of death what dreams may come when we have shuffled off this mortal coil, must give us pause' - Hamlet's reference to 'mortal coil' in the 'To be or not to be' soliloquy may turn out to hold the key to immortality, reports Clare Comer.

Scientists have discovered that Shakespeare's "mortal coil" actually exists - and could provide the answer to controlling ageing, they announced yesterday.

The "coil" is a spiral of DNA which becomes detached and replicates inside a cell until the cell is overwhelmed and dies.

Scientists have identified the phenomenon in ageing yeast cells. They believe the same mechanism may be at work in cells of higher organisms, possibly even humans, and that blocking the process may one day provide a way of holding back or halting the ageing process.

The breakthrough is the culmination of a series of important discoveries about ageing to emerge from studies of yeast by scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The latest findings were published yesterday in the journal *Cell*.

The scientists, led by Professor Leonard Guarente, wrote: "It is remarkable that this mechanism of ageing in mother yeast cells is so simple at a molecular level. It is conceivable that inhibitors of this [ageing] process can be found, and if so, such strategies might eventually prove useful in forestalling ageing in yeast and, perhaps, in higher organisms."

Their research shows that during a yeast cell's life, whenever a particular coiled piece of DNA pinches off a chromosome it begins to replicate. The coiled fragments, known as ERC (extrachromosomal ribosomal DNA), multiply within the nucleolus, a vital structure at the very heart of the cell, which produces the raw material for the cell's protein making machinery.

Eventually the nucleolus is so stuffed with ERC coils that it becomes blown up and fragmented. The cell's ability to replicate DNA breaks down and the cell dies.

The researchers said their data suggested accumulation of the cellular "mortal coils" may be like a time bomb. When a certain time is reached - with enough coils replicated - the cell

is killed. Professor Guarente said: "The best part is, it's obvious it's a clock. Set the clock early and the alarm rings early."

Damage to the cell may set the clock ticking, suggesting that, ironically, production of the fatal ERCs could result from the cell's attempt to repair itself. But the mechanism also appears to be inherited. The researchers thought it likely ERCs could form in "stem" or "progenitor" cells in mammals. These are primitive cells from which mature cells form and are found in organs like the skin, kidney, and liver, as well as the bone marrow and blood.

NHS funds in Scotland are to be reviewed to determine whether resources can be more fairly distributed to reflect the needs of local populations, the Government has announced.

One of Britain's leading microbiologists Professor John Arbutnot, will chair the steering group set up to consider the sharing out of funds across the whole spectrum of NHS care.

The Scottish health minister Sam Galbraith, in announcing the group, said that ensuring fairness in the distribution of funding was "fundamental to the renewal of the NHS in Scotland".

He added: "This steering group will have a challenging task in seeking to achieve a sharing of health funds which is as fair as possible to all parts of Scotland."

The current formula used for distributing some of these resources is now 20 years old and it is high time we reviewed it."

The review is also set to include the distribution of funds to GPs, dentists, opticians and spending of prescriptions.

This, said Mr Galbraith, would be in addition to money for hospitals and community health services.

"It is important we take a strategic look at how the cake is cut across the board," he added.

Professor Arbutnot, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Strathclyde, said he welcomed the challenge of leading the steering group which "has a key role in shaping the future of the NHS in Scotland".

He has previously held posts as Professor of Microbiology at Nottingham University and at Trinity College Dublin, and is at present a member of the Board of the Public Health Laboratory Service. His colleagues in the steering group will be announced in the new year.



Laurence Olivier as Hamlet in the 1948 film version of Shakespeare's masterpiece. The 'mortal coil' Hamlet refers to in the 'To be or not to be' soliloquy may hold the key to controlling ageing

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Seaweed's clue to tracking cancer

Ordinary seaweed, found on beaches across Britain, could provide scientists with crucial new information about the way cancer develops, a research team said yesterday.

Researchers at the University of the West of England in Bristol have found a way to track the growth of deadly cancer cells in the body using a seaweed extract. They hope to use the technique to discover why some cancer cells break free from their original growth and travel around the body, causing potentially deadly secondary cancers.

The scientists are extracting the protein lectin from a type of seaweed found on most beaches. The process involves collecting 14kg of seaweed to extract just 5mg of lectin, which is then linked to a marker dye before it attaches itself to cancer cells.

The dye allows scientists to track movement of the cancer cells as they split off to form secondary cancers, or metastases, which can be much harder to treat than primary cancers.

Although the seaweed dye does not help scientists to learn why certain cancers are more deadly than others, they hope that it will teach them more about the chemical changes which make the cancer cells divide.

The lecturer Ray Griffin, who heads the project, said: "Maybe in the future it will help us to stop the cancer cells breaking off in the first place and I believe that will be a major victory." Mr Griffin added that the seaweed marker could provide more information for the diagnosis of cancer and also some "novel therapies".

The procedure, which uses protein from the *Codium fragile* variety of seaweed, is entirely natural. Mr Griffin was particularly excited by this aspect of his team's find. "It is really important at a time when we are cutting down the earth's rain forests that we use a product which is growing naturally. Who knows what other useful resources there are just waiting to be discovered," he said.

— Katherine Griffiths

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Mexico mourns its dead

International outrage is growing over the massacre of 45 Mayan Indians in Mexico's troubled southern Chiapas province. Yet the state governor shows no sign of resigning.

Survivors of this week's violence in the community of Acteal buried those killed when paramilitary gunmen stormed through a makeshift camp in a blaze of automatic gunfire.

Bill Clinton, the United States President, expressed his outrage. "He condemned the attack as a violation of the most basic human values, and, on behalf of the American people, extends condolences to the families of the victims," Mike McCurry, a White House spokesman, said in a statement. France called on Mexico to investigate the paramilitary groups believed to be behind the massacre.

But Julio Cesar Ruiz Ferro, state governor of Chiapas, told reporters that he was not prepared to resign over the tragedy. "The

task now is not to lay blame, now is the time to apply the law," he said in Tuxtla Gutierrez, the state capital.

The Mexican press has been baying for the governor's head. A Roman Catholic priest, Gonzalo Iturte, had twice called Mr Ruiz's office with warnings of the carnage. Mr Ruiz said that his office had alerted police in the municipality of Chenalho after the first call and received assurances that nothing was amiss. The slaughter went on for five hours. Meanwhile, the shattered families of Acteal, in Chenalho, returned through the mountains to the scene of the killings, carrying white chrysanthemums and candles for a Christmas Eve Mass said over the victims' coffins by Bishop Samuel Ruiz in Spanish and by local leaders in the Tzotzil Indian language. "May those who did this find peace with their souls and with God, and may they rid themselves not only of their murderous weapons but also their attitude of hatred," the Bishop said.

Women keened over tiny blood-soaked coffins while state prosecutor's officials set up typewriters under a canopy of banana leaves to register the names of the dead.

"In a halfway civilised country, these things can't happen - or at least not without very serious consequences," the Rev Oscar Salinas said after assisting at the grave-side Mass. "But [in the past] the Mexican government has been very insensitive. ... I'm not optimistic things will change."

President Ernesto Zedillo has ordered an exhaustive hunt for the killers. On Thursday, the Federal Prosecutor, Pedro Madrazo, flew to Tuxtla Gutierrez to announce that 41 people were being detained for questioning. Four of the women killed were pregnant, he said, and almost all the victims had been shot in the back as they fled.

Monday's events were further clouded by survivors' testimony that the perpetrators were members of Mr Zedillo's own long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), but carried AK-47 rifles normally supplied only by the army. Some reports said the families sympathised with the EZLN (Zapatista National Liberation Army), led by Subcommandante Marcos, who staged a New Year's Day uprising against the government in 1994.

— Agencies



A mourner holding a candle as a Mass is said over the coffins of those shot dead in Mexico this week. Photograph: Reuters

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Santa makes his presents felt

A plane carrying medicine and an Icelandic Santa Claus loaded with Christmas presents landed in Iraq, the second flight of UN-approved humanitarian aid to arrive in two days.

As the Santa disembarked he said: "Stop killing my children." Referring to the UN embargo, which has caused malnutrition, he added: "Violence leads to more violence. Stop using children in politics."

The plane was chartered by the Icelandic charity Peace 2000 Institute in collaboration with an Italian group called Bridge to Baghdad. Iraq says sanctions imposed after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait have caused the death of hundreds of thousands of children. A UN report said the measures had inflicted widespread malnutrition.

— Reuters, Baghdad

Le Pen pays for race slur

Jean-Marie Le Pen, the extreme-right political leader, was found guilty of violating anti-racism laws by repeating his view that Nazi gas chambers were "a mere detail" of the Second World War.

A court in the Paris suburb of Nanterre ordered Le Pen, president of France's National Front, to pay 300,000 francs (£31,250) for publication of the judgement in six daily papers and six weekly publications. Le Pen, who insists he is not anti-Semitic, was also fined a symbolic one franc in damages.

The International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism was one of several groups to file suit after he said in Munich on 5 December that he still believed the gas chambers were just a detail of history.

— Reuters, Paris

Violence at Kenyan poll rally

Six people were hurt when rival party supporters clashed after an election rally by the Kenyan President, Daniel arap Moi, in western Kenya.

Trouble began when Mr Moi was leaving Homa Bay, Nyanza Province, after speaking to a crowd of about 1,000 people. "Some of his officials called for the Kanu (Kenya African National Union party) salute and when some people refused to

give it, fighting started," a witness said. The Kanu candidate, Philomena Okunde, was slashed on the neck with a machete; he blamed National Democratic Party activists for the fighting. Kenya goes to the polls on Monday to elect a new parliament and president for a five-year term and also to vote for hundreds of candidates in local elections.

— Reuters, Nairobi

THE INDEPENDENT

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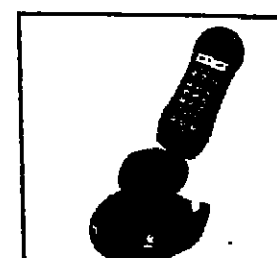
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'Little Miss Colorado': The child beauty queen JonBenét Ramsey was found dead at home in Boulder on Boxing Day last year. Photograph: Rex Features

Who killed this girl? The mysterious murder that still haunts America

Six-year-old JonBenét Ramsey was just one of the 2,000 or so children murdered in the United States last year, but her death shocked and fascinated America like no other. With no one yet indicted for the crime, Mary Dejevsky delves into the continuing mystery of who killed JonBenét.

It was one year ago yesterday that a millionaire company director by the name of John Ramsey discovered the small, limp body of his daughter in the basement of the family house in Boulder, Colorado. She had been beaten, tied and garroted with the stick of a paintbrush.

Eight hours before, the bubbly-haired blonde child had been thought kidnapped. Her mother, Patsy, had reported finding a ransom note on the back staircase, demanding the very specific sum of \$118,000, equivalent to John Ramsey's Christmas bonus. Kidnap cases tend to be kept under wraps, at least in the early stages, and this was no different. Given the family's affluence and JonBenét's worth as a diminutive star on the Colorado child beauty queen circuit, kidnapping seemed plausible.

It was not until evening that police asked John Ramsey to search the house - again. He found her body, barely hidden in bedding, and carried her up to her room.

Before the murder, the name JonBenét Ramsey would have meant little to anyone outside her immediate family and the cliquey child-pageant circuit in Colorado where she performed so successfully. Now, it would be hard to find an American who does not know who she was and, what is more, does not have a view about her death.

Almost immediately, the weight of suspicion fell on her parents. The popular view, derived with cold logic from contemplation of the obvious - "it stands to reason, doesn't it?" - is that one or other parent must have "done it". The case fascinated in a peculiarly American way.

The family has money. Their vast house was in a wealthy suburb of Boulder, itself one of the most sought-after places to live in America. The family also had celebrity, of a minor kind. Patsy Ramsey is a one-time contestant for the Miss America title. Her daughter, whom she appeared to be grooming to follow in her footsteps, had won the title "Little Miss Colorado". There was video-film of JonBenét's beauty contest appearances that revealed to America a



John and Patsy Ramsey: No one has yet been indicted for their daughter's murder. Photograph: AP

world that many never knew existed: a world of high-pressure rivalry between parents and children barely out of toddlerhood, of costumes, cosmetics and contracts as hard-edged as any in the adult world.

JonBenét herself came across from the videos as a Nineties Judy Garland, shorn of even the pretence of innocence, with manners and make-up suggestive far beyond her years. Friends and teachers, however, described her as unspoilt, reflective rather than showy, and normal for her age. But it was the videos that the rest of America saw, and the combination of fact and circumstance surrounding her death seemed compelling. The house bore no traces of forced entry and there were said to be no footprints in the snow around the house. Who would have had access to the house but the parents? Who would have known the sum of John Ramsey's bonus? And if an outsider was suspected, why did the police mount no man-hunt for a dangerous killer?

Experts told television shows that the overwhelming majority of child murders are committed by someone in the family. Motives were easily imputed to each parent. Was Patsy perhaps jealous of JonBenét's youth and success? Had John a perverted sexual motive? Suspicions were fuelled by

the parents' subsequent conduct: they hired separate lawyers, their own medical and forensic experts, then refused for four months to be questioned separately by police. They moved out of state, to Atlanta, Georgia, where they have family.

While public opinion focused on the parents, the media concentrated on the police. "A bungled operation" is the general verdict. The house was not sealed after the kidnap was reported, and relatives reportedly came and went. The body was moved - when John Ramsey took it upstairs - before the police saw it. Neighbours were reportedly not questioned until recently.

Month by month, new facts have trickled out: the text of the two-and-a-half-page ransom note, purporting to be from "a small foreign faction" and warning against going to the police; the position of the body, trussed around the stick; in the past week, evidence that a stun-gun might have been used to knock the child out before she was killed.

But questions of substance have not been answered. A post-mortem examination supposedly did not prove that JonBenét had or had not been sexually assaulted. A DNA test was inconclusive. Four hand-writing tests on Patsy Ramsey have left open whether she wrote the ransom note, but es-

tablished that the paper came from a notepad in the house. JonBenét's 11-year-old brother, Burke, was interviewed briefly early on and excluded from the investigation, except as a possible witness. Police say they would like to talk to him again, and to Mr and Mrs Ramsey, but they are not apparently forcing the issue.

Some of those who blame police incompetence attribute it to inexperience: murder investigations are rare in Boulder. Others contend that the investigators were no less competent than many others - just unlucky in the way a supposed kidnapping turned into a murder. If a murder is not solved in the first two days, they note, it is many times more difficult to solve it at all.

Two weeks ago, in anticipation of an anniversary that the people of Boulder - but not of America - understandably want to forget, there were reports that the Boulder District Attorney was on the verge of bringing preliminary charges. The Ramsey parents, it was said, were to be brought before a grand jury so that the case against them could be weighed.

But nothing happened. It may be the season of goodwill, but in the case of JonBenét Ramsey, everyone is still free to believe the worst of everyone else - and does.

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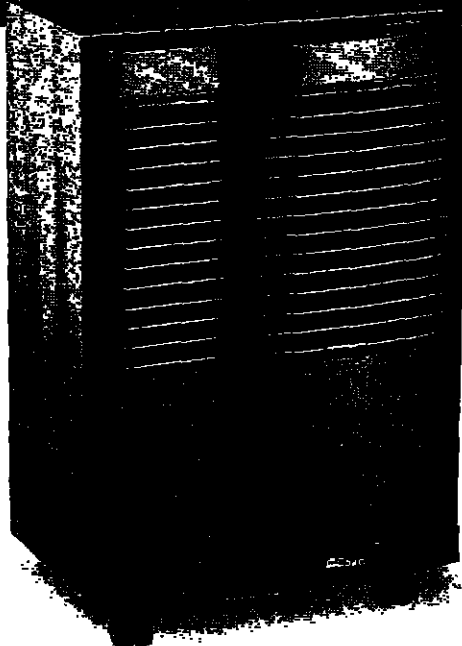


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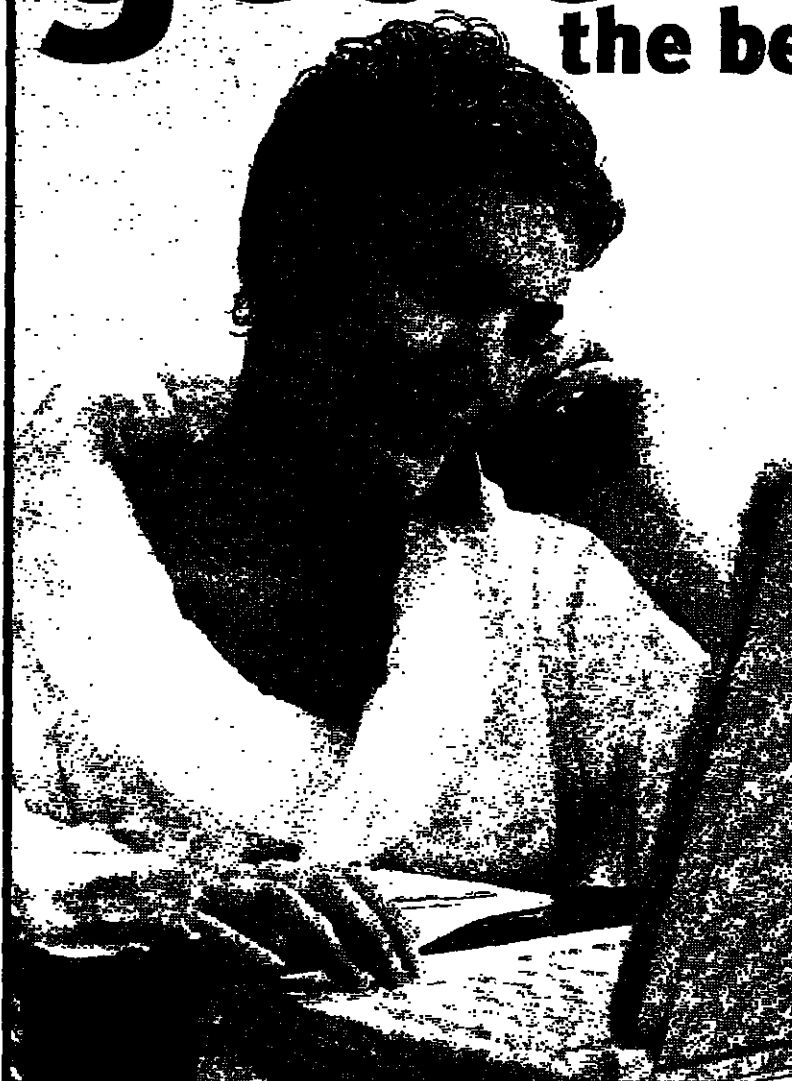
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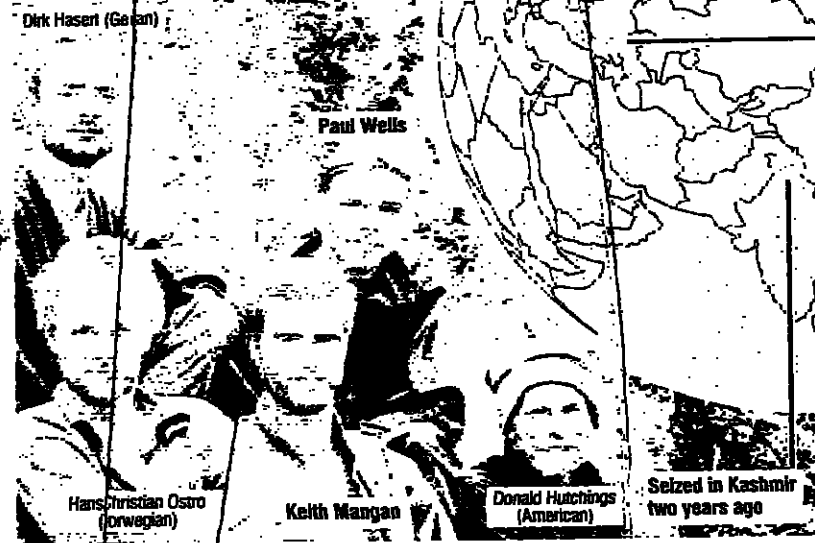
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13/MISSING

The hostages

These are just a few of the thousands of people around the world who have disappeared, held hostage for political ends or kidnapped for ransom. At first, there is hope: ransom demand, or perhaps even covert talks with the kidnappers. But as time goes by, the lives of those who have left behind become more and more desperate.



Families face nightmare wait for news of hostages

For some Britons there has been a feast, and no relatives to celebrate or quarrel with. Steve Crowshaw reports on the invisible but not forgotten ones.

Perhaps the most famous Russian poet of the Second World War, by Konstantin Simboov, is called 'Wait for Me'.
*Wait for me, and I'll return
Only wait very hard...
Wait for I'll return, defying
every death.
And those who do not wait,
say that I was lucky.
They never will understand
that in the midst of death
You with your waiting saved
me.*

In more recent years, the poem has taken on different emblematic force. It has been quoted for those who were taken hostage in Beirut — as relevant to them as it was to those who had been sent to the front. A nightmare that is both personal and universal.

We have learnt to take for granted that the hostages in Beirut eventually returned. Books such as Brian Keenan's powerful account, *An Evil Cradling* — a biting mixture of humour and horror — describe the reality that continued through the metaphorical and physical darkness. Seen from today's perspective, it seems obvious that Brian Keenan, John McCarthy and Terry Waite eventually came back, and took up almost ordinary lives. At the time, it was anything but obvious.

With usual world-weary, deep-throat official sources used to shake their heads, asking journalists (for background use only, quotation not permitted) that nothing could be done. There was confident inside-track speculation about where various hostages were reckoned to have died. Jill Morrell's fight, which successfully raised the profile of the missing hostages, was against that complacent ignorance, as much as anything else.

It is a message that has not been lost. The relatives of Camilla Carr and Jon James, who were taken hostage in Chechnya in July, have relied on the lessons of Ms Morrell's campaign to raise the profile of the missing couple. One of the most important aims is that the two should be remembered. The couple went to Grozny to help with a children's charity there. They had bodyguards, but the latter were unable to protect them. Somewhere out there, they are alive. But not much more known than that. Rumour and counter-rumour swirl thick and fast. There have been unconfirmed ransom demands — and beyond that, silence.

Michael Penrose, an aid worker whose year was held for several weeks in Chechnya, noted at service for Camilla Carr and Jon James this month

that it is sometimes as difficult for those who wait as for those in captivity. As Brian Keenan noted after his own release, "The words 'They also serve who only stand and wait' was never more true."

In Cambodia, British mine-clearance expert Christopher Howes was abducted by the Khmer Rouge two years ago. His parents recently placed advertisements in the Cambodian press appealing for information, but without success. There have been reports of Mr Howes' death, but always unconfirmed; equally unverifiable reports suggest he was still alive in May.

Most difficult of all for the relatives are the cases where death comes to seem increasingly inevitable, but is still not confirmed. Two Britons, Keith Mangan and Paul Wells, were among a group of Westerners seized by extremists in Kashmir two years ago. Most reports now say that the two are dead; some of the relatives themselves have more or less accepted it. But there is no confirmation of their fate — no verifiable account of how or where they may have died.

A decomposed body which was dug up in September was initially believed to be that of Mr Wells, but this proved to be a false alarm. Given the experience of the Beirut hostages, it is still conceivable that they are alive. Nor can the families mourn, until they have convincing proof of what has happened to the two men.

The handful of Britons who have been seized are outnumbered many times over by other nationalities who have been taken hostage worldwide. For the families of the hostages, there will only be one way to make a happy new year.

● **Zamboanga (AP)** — Muslim bandits reportedly linked to a rebel group freed a kidnapped German executive yesterday after 108 days of captivity in the southern Philippines. The abductors are believed to be renegade members of the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the biggest Muslim rebel group still fighting the government.

Robert Buehs, 50, a camera executive from Rhede, Germany, was turned over to negotiators before dawn by four of his abductors after ransom was paid. The amount of the ransom and who paid it were not disclosed. However, a member of the negotiating team said on that the abductors were paid some 6 million pesos (£92,600), representing "board and lodging" for Mr Buehs while in captivity.

Mr Buehs was handed over to his father-in-law, the chief of the local branch of the National Bureau of Investigation. He was not available for comment.

The abductors brought Mr Buehs by boat from a nearby island to a coastal bridge west of Zamboanga, and fled after completing the transfer, police said.

CHECHNYA KIDNAPPERS' 800 VICTIMS

Russian officials claim that 800 hostages have been taken in Chechnya in the past year alone. The breakaway Russian republic, whose separatist leaders fought a bloody war of independence against Russian troops in 1994-96, has been rocked over the past 12 months by a wave of kidnappings of foreigners and Russians by armed gangs seeking ransom money.

A Polish envoy, Zenon Kuchciak, yesterday flew to Chechnya to try to secure the release of five Polish aid workers abducted this month. He had previously worked in Chechnya for nearly three years for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), speaks the local language and has many contacts in the region.

On Tuesday the Polish Foreign Minister, Bronislaw Goremek, said the five young men, working for a Polish-Chechen

friendship society and delivering aid, were abducted on 17 December after meeting Chechnya's former president, Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev.

They were reported missing late last week by a Chechen with whom they were staying in the village of Samashki, about 20 miles west of Grozny, the region's capital. Their host had found their deserted minibus with the tyres shot out on the road to Grozny. There has so far been no ransom demand.

After news of the Poles' abduction, the Russian Foreign Ministry said its security forces were taking "necessary measures" to free them and repeated an appeal to foreigners to stay away from the tiny Caucasus region. "This routine act of terrorism, which deserves strong condemnation, confirms that an extremely unfavourable, criminal atmosphere reigns in Chechnya," the ministry said. On Thursday, five journalists

working for Reuters, WTN and two Russian television networks, ORT and NTV, went missing in Russia's southern region of Dagestan, which borders Chechnya, while investigating an attack there earlier in the week on a Russian tank unit and police post.

NTV said its correspondent in Dagestan had received a telephone call claiming a group calling itself the Dagestani People's Militia was holding several Chechens, including the journalists, as hostages.

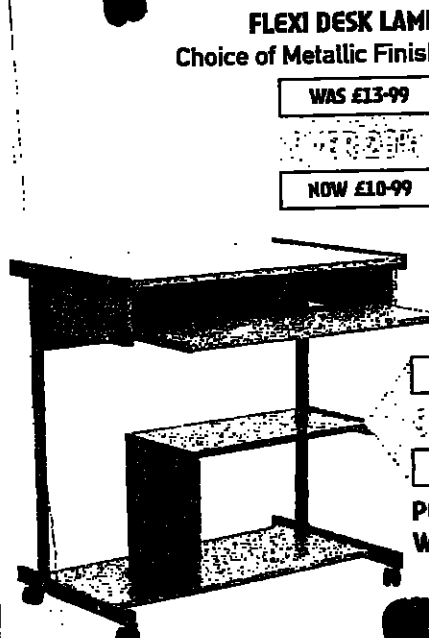
The group said it would only free them in exchange for seven Dagestani police officers taken prisoner on Wednesday, the Itar-Tass news agency said. The police were among 11 ethnic Chechens taken prisoner, reportedly by Dagestanis, to avenge the kidnapping on Monday of local residents in Dagestan by Chechen gunmen.

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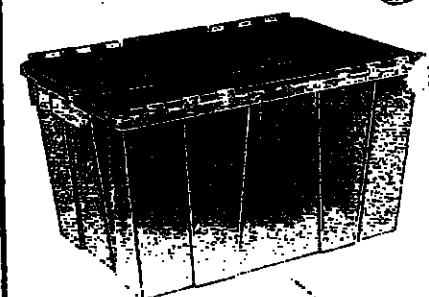
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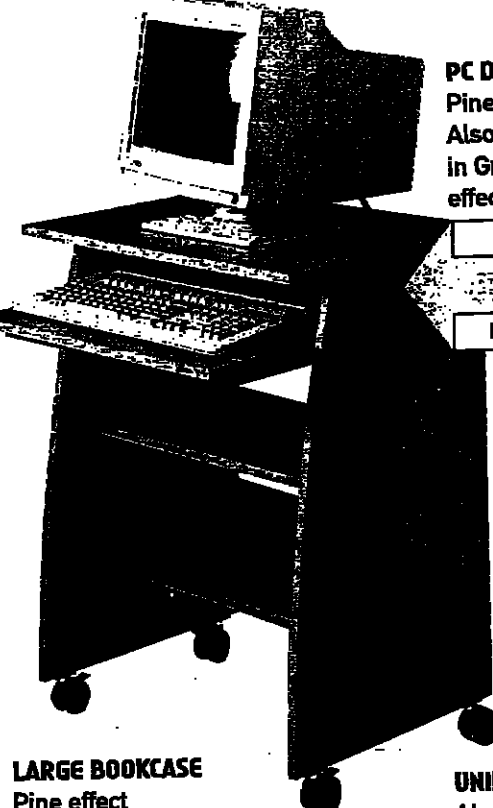


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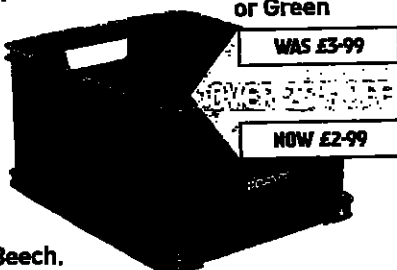
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Seoul's \$10bn lifeline fails to hide scale of debt crisis

Euphoria swept South Korea's battered financial markets yesterday as they responded to the international community's 'Christmas gift' of a \$10bn cash transfusion to avert debt defaults. Steven Vines reports.

The South Korean won, which has seen 50 per cent of its value wiped out since July, staged a record recovery, with a rise of almost 24 per cent. At one point in yesterday's trading it had surged by 31 per cent against the US dollar.

The stock market, which has been no less battered than the local currency, also took heart, rising by almost 7 per cent, more or less making up the

ground lost in a record-breaking price fall on Monday which greeted President-elect Kim Dae Jung's comment that he was "flabbergasted" about the state of the nation's finances.

Although the emergency transfusion of funds from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and 13 other countries, including Britain, averted the real threat of debt default, the size of South Korea's foreign debts in comparison to its foreign-exchange reserves suggests the measures will hardly dent the mood of pessimism.

South Korea is believed to have short-term debts of \$100 bn (£62bn), \$15bn of which are due for repayment in the next few days. The total foreign debt could be as high as \$200bn. Last week South Korea's foreign reserves stood at little more than \$10bn. Attempts to get Seoul's creditors to roll over their loans provided futile.

Hence the emergency which led to the scramble at the beginning of the week to prevent the potentially biggest default in history. When South Korea's financial markets reopen on Monday they are almost certain to slip back.

They may well follow the pattern seen in Japan, where the Tokyo stock exchange saw a 5 per cent rise on Christmas Day in response to the rescue package announced on Christmas Eve. Yesterday that rise turned into a 3.25 per cent drop as investors rubbed their eyes and realised the threat of widespread corporate bankruptcies had not receded.

South Korea is now in line to receive \$78bn in loans from the IMF and other institutions. In return the IMF has pushed a battering-ram through the door of the highly protectionist and heavily state-influenced South Korean economy, which

rose to be the world's 11th-largest and managed to keep foreign investors confined to the outer fringes.

In addition to a raft of financial market liberalisation, transparency and other measures forced on the Seoul, the IMF has used the emergency package to squeeze yet more concessions. All restrictions on foreigner access to bond markets will be swept aside, while access to other capital markets will be further liberalised.

The restructuring of the financial sector, which in practice means widespread closures and mergers of ailing institutions, will be stepped up.

On the trade front, the iron doors keeping out imports will be thrown open and trade-related subsidies, which helped make South Korean goods highly competitive in foreign markets, will be cast aside.

Letters, page 17



Home: Tahar Madraswala is greeted in Ahmedabad, India, after a 12-year, 128,000km, 34-country bicycle tour to promote peace and brotherhood. Photograph: Reuters

Japanese party calls it quits

The leader of Japan's main opposition party announced the dissolution of the three-year-old party. In a boost for the beleaguered Prime Minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, the New Frontier Party (NFP) chief Ichiro Ozawa said formal disbandment would take place today. NFP sources said he had 100 MPs planned to form a new party next month. Other NFP MPs would also band together to form several new parties.

—Reuters, Tokyo

No entry

Chinese border guards barred Wong Chung-Ki, spokesman for Hong Kong's Democratic Party, from entering mainland China for a vacation. His wife and three fellow Democrats with him were allowed in. The guards would only say they were following orders, he said.

—AP, Hong Kong

Jiang warning

President Jiang Zemin of China, eyeing potential labour unrest next year as economic reforms translate into lay-offs, has ordered police to step up efforts to safeguard social stability, state media reported. He told a law-enforcement conference that failure to keep the social peace as China deepens reforms could wipe out economic achievements.

—Reuters, Peking

'Bird flu' found in two more children

Two more young children in Hong Kong fell victim to "bird flu" yesterday. There have been 11 confirmed and 9 suspected cases and four fatalities. Although it is not yet causing panic, hospitals and clinics are overflowing with worried patients.

The flu, properly known as the H5N1 virus, was previously only found in poultry. Its spread in Hong Kong has shown it can be transmitted from birds to humans but doctors do not know exactly how, nor if it can spread from human to human. A one-year-old boy, previously suspected of having the virus, and a three-year-old girl

were the latest to be diagnosed with the flu, a government statement said.

Poultry markets have been temporarily closed and fumigated and hygiene instructions issued. The Chinese have been persuaded to impose a temporary ban on the export of poultry to Hong Kong, and measures are being taken to set up testing procedures before birds are shipped across the border. The mainland is the main source of chickens for Hong Kong.

Although official Chinese co-operation has been welcomed, there is concern over an announcement on Thursday in the

border town of Shenzhen that shipments should resume next week because inspection procedures would be finalized by then. The Chinese say farms inspected showed no signs of the virus; there are no reports of anyone there having bird flu. But birds in China are known to have died of it. Hong Kong has no power to ban exports from the mainland; instead, it has to rely on "voluntary" bans.

The virus is not necessarily a killer but, if not detected early enough, it leads to complications which can be fatal.

—Steven Vines, Hong Kong

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Men behaving crapulously

Television's prevailing fantasy of Christmas is a roaring fire, deep snow, a mountain of perfectly wrapped presents under a 20ft tree and delirious levels of bonhomie (such that passers-by chortle merrily as they snowball each other in the streets). All is warmth and prosperity, with the turkey gleaming as if it has been french-polished and every face around the table shining with contentment. Christmas trees don't have needles, toys don't need batteries and drinkers don't get hangovers.

Rather unexpectedly you were given all of this in the *Men Behaving Badly* special on Christmas Day (BBC1). Simon Nye having decided to intersperse the domestic dystopia of Tony and Gary's flat with scenes of soft-focus Perry-Como-esque festivities. You first saw the boys walking through a Dickensian street scene, arms crammed with parcels as they exchanged greetings with the roast chestnut seller and jolly urchins; then you cut to the reality, a rain-drenched, litter-strewn market street, on which Gary was searching for an 11th-hour Christmas present. Tony followed rather erratically behind, clutching a sprig of mistletoe with which he seduced passing dogs into a drunken exchange of saliva. "Happy f---ing Christmas to you too," snarled Gary, after the only stallholder still open had attempted to charge him £30 for her spare false teeth.

This alternation between two kinds of cliché – the delusive and the world-weary – continued throughout the episode and proved rather effective, the programme being broadcast at a time when even the most determinedly seasonal viewer might have been beginning to feel a little crapulous. Those cloyed by synthetic visions of yuletide glee will have enjoyed the astringency of the pastiche; those slumped in festive anti-climax – exhausted by misconceived presents, compulsory good will and over-indulgence – will have relished the only mildly exaggerated reflection of their own day. The jokes seemed a good deal perkier than they have in the last few episodes of the series, though they were as dependent as ever on the staples of feminine exasperation and male oafishness. This being the season of licence and unrule, I found myself watching with two six-year-olds, and I can report that they both found the inevitable willy joke hilarious to the point of abdominal pain.

CHRISTMAS TELEVISION



REVIEWED BY
THOMAS SUTCLIFFE

Gary and Tony would presumably have spent Christmas Eve watching the *Euro-trash* Christmas Special on Channel 4 – a guaranteed provider of semi-nudity, double-entendre and lavatory humour. *Euro-trash*'s idea of the Christmas spirit would be perfectly summed up by a musical vibrator that plays "Oh Come All Ye Faithful". They hadn't actually managed to track down such an item for their seasonal gift guide, but they did include reports on the Catalan tradition of adorning their nativity scenes with a small crouching man attending to a call of nature, a nude aerobics video and a French amateur porn mogul who turns up at the door carrying a camcorder and wearing a Santa negligee. I am thinking of seeing a therapist about the problem but I find I enjoy *Euro-trash*, in particular the candid air of contempt with which Antoine de Caunes delivers his finest stocking crammed with salacious tat.

Gary and Tony would not have spent Christmas Eve watching any of the programmes on BBC 2, which offered a rather more elevated notion of grown-up fun. The best of these was "Toy Stories", a *Modern Times* about the way in which no adult can ever be said to have left off childish things, our toys having made us what we are. Stephen Walker slightly blurred the focus of his central theme by including footage of children talking about their *Tamagotchis* (charming, but slightly off the point) and some montages of children playing that reminded you of the calculated sentiment of health-insurance adverts. But there was a truer pathos to



Behave yourself, it's Christmas: the jokes were perkier than in recent episodes, but still dependent on the staples of feminine exasperation and male oafishness

some of the tales told here, a sharp sense of the wayward mental perspectives of childhood, when the loss of a toy can leave a lifetime scar of bereavement.

One middle-aged woman was momentarily undone by recalling how her fastidious father had thrown a beloved sailor doll on to the fire, because she had been sick over it: 50 years on, she still had the miniature substitute which she had saved her pennies to buy. Another woman recalled the aching grief of seeing her own dolls laid out at the school fête, for others to buy. I had recently conducted a cull on my own children's growing herd of soft toys but this programme made me feel so unnerved by what I might have done to as yet

uncalled-for souls that I am contemplating resurrecting them from the attic limbo in which they languish.

Arena's programme "The Banana" later that night was much less enchanting – a notionally sprightly miscellany of banana facts and folklore that became increasingly irritating the longer it continued. *Arena* has made a specialty of these anthology programmes – in which the cultural and social implications of a single object are explored – but they only work if there is some sense of covert argument at play. Here there was no editorial principle that I could discern beyond an open door: if you did a word search on "banana" in any sizeable database and then assembled the resulting hits

in no particular order, you would end up with something very similar – Ian Hislop saying "I'm a banana", the Reverend Cannaan Banana, Freddie Mercury with bananas on his head, Auberon Waugh's now well-trodden story about his father eating all the bananas, banana republics. I usually love bananas, but I couldn't finish this one.

Almost equally ill-conceived was *A Christmas Dickens* (BBC2 *passim*) – not because the hessian-bearded Simon Callow wasn't up to the task of reading Dickens (there's no doubt that he can "do the police in different voices") but because the unwieldy decision had been made to employ a living laugh-track. Every now and then the camera would cut away to a group of

people in Victorian dress, all of them obliged (contractually, I imagine) to adopt facial expressions of intense interest and amusement. The most conspicuously distracting of these was a gentleman with mutton-chop whiskers and shining eyes whose face was the very epitome of comic anticipation – he trembled to the brim with scarcely contained hilarity, every now and then spilling over in a variety of Equity-minimum chuckles, titters and chorches. A more effective way of ensuring that the audience would remain story-faced I cannot conceive.

Thomas Sutcliffe's daily television review returns in 'The Eye' on Monday 5 January.

Strike up the bland: light music fails to deliver the Christmas message



Borrowed life music better known as the theme tune of Dr Finlay's Casebook

The billing in *Radio Times* for *Composers of the Week* this week contains a baffling, even worrying sentence: "In recent years," it reads, "light music has undergone a welcome renaissance." Well, there's certainly been a renaissance, in which Radio 3 has played its part: a few years ago, it broadcast an excellent series called *Charge of the Light Brigade* that showed that the broad category of "light music" includes things that are resourceful, witty and even touching. But, listening to the first three days of a *Composers of the Week* turned over to "British Light Music", you realise just how bland most of this stuff is.

Take Anthony Collins's *Yankee Fair*, played on Monday, and supposedly a portrait of Regency England. If you think the central characteristic of Regency England was a brisk, optimistic prissiness, then this little canter might have had something to say to you; historical insight aside, it was a bland, uninventive piece. And most of the other music heard followed the pattern. The only pieces that seemed to have any life at all were those that borrowed it from else-

where – like the March from Trevor Duncan's *Little Suite*, better known as the theme tune for *Dr Finlay's Casebook*. So the idea of this stuff having a renaissance is anything but welcome.

This probably wouldn't bother me if there didn't seem to be so much of the rubbish around. On Sunday, Radio 2 devoted a whole hour to the composer of *The Typewriter* (aka the theme to *The News Quiz*), in *Sleigh Ride: The Leroy Anderson Story*. "Story" was pitching it a bit strong: Anderson's CV didn't feature much in the way of incident (it is emblematic that he spent the war working for US Army Intelligence in Iceland), and David Jacobs was hard put to assemble a narrative of a life without landmarks. Still, that is in keeping with the music, which is basically Eric Coates with sound-effects – typewriter bells, sleigh bells, coconut shells. (Those were in *The Syncopated Clock*. As Jacobs pointed out, composers since Haydn had used clocks in their music, but only Anderson had thought of making them syncopated. Which makes Haydn look

CHRISTMAS RADIO



REVIEWED BY
ROBERT HANKS

pretty dull and unoriginal, doesn't it?)

This all seems to be part of a conspiracy to soothe, along with the *Easy Does It Christmas Special* (R2, Sat – Jacobs again), Classic FM's nightly *Smooth Classics at Seven*, *A Merry Maxmas* (with Max Bygraves, R2, Christmas Eve) and *Des O'Connor... With a Christmas Audience* (R2, Mon – though

O'Connor at least has a degree of vim and professionalism). It can't be a coincidence that all this blandness comes creeping out of the woodwork at Christmas. It looks like a deliberate response to a time of year when people's thoughts turn towards ways of restraining themselves from throttling their loved ones. Perhaps we should welcome it; but it leaves me depressed. Music as a means of transcending circumstance seems to be getting thrown aside; this is music as a means of suppressing feeling, of achieving spiritual numbness.

Just to prove that soothing need not mean bland, Radio 4 is broadcasting a short season of work by Piers Plowright, the BBC's most distinguished features producer, who retires on his 60th birthday this Tuesday. In *An Artist in Sound* (Christmas Day), Plowright recalled a story of his father's about the General Strike, when he heard the sound of a revolutionary mob advancing inexorably towards him, which turned out to be a flock of sheep. The moral? That sound is ambiguous – open to interpretation in a way that the visual is not.

The point was beautifully demonstrated in two other programmes in the season: *Mr Fletcher, the Poet* (Christmas Day) and *Mr B (Boxing Day)*. Both consisted essentially of a lone voice telling its story. Jeff Fletcher was a Leicestershire builder who wrote poetry in his spare time, winning the Commonwealth Poetry Prize in 1951; Mr B was James Bellamy, an elderly schoolmaster who taught Plowright's own son, and who professed a passionate, distinctly old-fashioned blend of discipline and kindness.

A less subtle producer might have challenged their stories, poked at the self-pity and self-love that was an undertone in both; or might have tried to draw out the emotional aspects of the story with music: something in a minor key, say, to underline Mr B's grieving for a boy who had died. But in letting them speak for themselves, Plowright gave them an integrity, a wholeness as well as an honesty, that won respect. In their way, these programmes hinted at a kind of wisdom and generosity that, well, seems rather in tune with the spirit of Christmas.

"BRILLIANT... DEFINITELY NOT TO BE MISSED"

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Nicolette Larson

Nicolette Larson, singer and songwriter: born Helena, Montana 17 July 1952; married 1990 Russell Kunkel (one daughter); died Los Angeles 16 December 1997.

The transition from backing vocalist to lead singer is not always an easy one, though Sheryl Crow has managed it recently, while the American singer Nicolette Larson came to the fore in the Seventies. With "Lotta Love", a simple but heartfelt Neil Young composition, she reached the American Top 10 in 1979 and was voted Best Female Vocalist by *Performances* magazine.

Before and after her major success, Larson also sang backing vocals on a multitude of recordings made in Los Angeles by the likes of Christopher Cross, the Doobie Brothers, Van Halen and Emmylou Harris. In the latter part of the Eighties, she made a successful switch to the country music which had always been inherent in her singing style. She also acted and campaigned for President Clinton in 1996.

She was born in Helena, Montana, in 1952, into a large family (she was one of six children) which followed her US Treasury Department Executive father around the country. The Larsons moved every couple of years and the young Nicolette was exposed to every genre of music from soul to pop via country. She especially liked Hank Williams and her singing was undoubtedly influenced by Dolly Parton, Tammy Wynette and Loretta Lynn, but her peripatetic childhood and varied taste would later be reflected in albums containing Tamla Motown material alongside songs by Sam Cooke, Burt Bacharach and Jackson Browne.

Larson graduated from high school and majored in psy-

chology and sociology at college. At 21, she found herself working as a part-time secretary and a waitress and decided to head for California in search of the American dream. Always the practical girl, she bought a return bus ticket in case things didn't work out. But they did. In a club, she met a lady who organised the Golden State Bluegrass Festival and hired her as a secretary.

"From there, everything snowballed," she would later recall. "You sing a little with somebody backstage, then you sing background on somebody's demo, then somebody lets you sing on an album and pretty soon people are talking about you. Then you go on the road with somebody - Hoyt Axton or Commander Cody - and they let you do a song in the show, and pretty soon people are saying: that girl was good! Then they offer you a record deal."

For Larson, it was as simple as that. By her own accord, she "was not a prolific songwriter". But she had an amazing, twangy, vulnerable and emotive voice. In 1978, Lenny Waronker signed her to Warner Brothers and put her together with the Doobie Brothers producer Ted Templeman and Bill Payne of Little Feat fame. And she brought "Lotta Love", a Neil Young composition, to the party.

"I got that song off a tape I found lying on the floor of Neil's car," she said in interviews. "I popped it in the tape player and commented on what a great song it was. Neil said: 'You want it? It's yours.' With Templeman's smooth production and Jimmie Haskell's sophisticated string arrangement "Lotta Love" became an American Top 10 hit in 1979 and, alongside Boz Scaggs, ushered in a new era of blue-eyed soul LA-style.

Still, on Nicolette, her debut album which sold half a million

copies and was certified gold, Larson was more than the crown princess of California rock. She was equally at ease with Jesse Winchester's "Rumba Girl", given a Little Feat funky flavouring by the keyboardist Bill Payne and guitarist Paul Barrere.

A year later, she duetted with Michael McDonald (of Doobie Brothers fame) on "Let Me Go Love" and reached the Top 40, but in the Nick of Time and Radioland were less successful albums. She was seen as a poor alternative to Linda Ronstadt and Emmylou Harris (she often sang with both) and couldn't quite follow up her major hit. In 1982, she worked with Andrew Gold on *All Dressed Up & No Place To Go*, but to no avail.

Two years later, after touring with the musical Pump Boys and Dinettes in which she played the part of Rhetta Cyp, Larson signed to MCA Nashville and went back to her country roots, stressing at the time that "country music is almost what Southern California rock was - is really. The Eagles today would be a country band."

After initial resistance from a scene that doesn't like performers switching styles (Juice Newton being a classic example), Larson toured with Steve Earle and Poco, released two albums (*Say When* and *Rose of My Heart*) and scored several Top 40 country hits ("That's How You Know When Love's Right", with Steve Wariner, was nominated for duet of the year by the Country Music Association in 1985).

But even at the height of her popularity in Nashville (the Academy of Country Music named her Best New Vocalist in 1984), the singer with the long distinctive black hair (Crystal Gayle and Eddie Bricken had nothing on her) remained a California resident and was very



Larson: blue-eyed soul LA-style

Photograph: Glenn A. Baker / Redferns

much part of California's *crème de la crème* of session players, appearing in concert with Jimmy Buffet, the Beach Boys and Willie Nelson. She moved into acting, guesting in the US sitcom *Throb* and acting opposite Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito in *Twins* (1988). Somewhat typecast as a nightclub singer, her performance of "I'd Die For This Dance" proved one of the saving graces of that box-office smash.

In 1990, Nicolette Larson married the drummer Russ Kunkel (the number one Los Angeles session drummer who worked on such classic recordings as Carole King's *Tapestry*). After the birth of their daughter Elsie May, she recorded *Sleep Baby Sleep* (for the Sony Wonder label in 1994), a collection of lullabies and children's songs which included duets with Linda Ronstadt and Graham Nash.

Five years ago, Larson's career completed a full circle when Neil Young called on her to provide the backing vocals on his excellent *Harvest Moon* album. She was on especially fine form on the ethereal "Dreaming Man" and on a live performance of "Natural Beauty", echoing Young's chorus of "a natural beauty should be preserved like a monument to nature".

- Pierre Perrone

Admiral Jacques Guillon

Jacques Guillon, naval officer: born Cosme-sur-Loire (Nièvre), France 27 December 1916; died Mériot (Aube), France 8 December 1997.

It was comparatively rare for French naval personnel to join General de Gaulle's Free French movement in London. By the end of 1941, fewer than 5,000 men of the French navy served under his leadership. There were obvious reasons for this since a sailor was of most value if his ship and its crew had remained with him. But, most important of all, the French navy was opposed to Britain because of Operation "Catapult".

At Mers-el-Kébir, by Oran, in Algeria, on 3 July 1940, the British navy had attacked French warships. Some 1,300 Frenchmen were killed in this action, which had been brought about by the British government's fear that the French fleet would be used by the Germans. This event still arouses resentment in certain French memories.

It was remarkable that out of this unhappy episode emerged two young Frenchmen who were to distinguish themselves in the Allied cause. One was Honoré d'Etienne d'Orves, a naval lieutenant who was *officier d'ordonnance* to Admiral Godfrey, the commander of the French force. He came to London in September 1940, returned to France and became a resistance organiser. He was betrayed and shot by the Germans on 29 August 1941, reportedly the first resistance fighter to be executed. The other was Jacques Guillon.

Guillon, who was a product of the École Navale, was serving on the torpedo boat *Torpedo* as a lieutenant when the British attacked at Mers-el-Kébir. He was lucky because the ship, managed to get away and was not pursued by the British. Guillon remained in the Mediterranean until November 1942. Then, with the Allied expedition to North Africa and the German invasion of unoccupied France, the French authorities gave orders that the fleet in Toulon should be scuttled.

Fearful that his own ship would be captured by the Germans or the Italians, Guillon sabotaged it and took refuge on shore. There, disguised as a priest, he made his way on foot to join the Free French forces of General Leclerc in the desert. After his triumphal expedition from Chad, Leclerc was moving into Tunisia and Tripolitania, fighting with British and New Zealand forces. Guillon took part in the capture of Tunis (which fell on 8 May 1943) and Bizerta.

Guillon was given the rank of captain and attached to the tanks and motorised unit of Leclerc's forces. Made up of many nationalities, this was the famous second armoured division, the *Deuxième Division Blindée* (known as the *Deuxième DB*). After their victories

in Africa, they were transferred to Yorkshire for special training in preparation for their landing in France. General Eisenhower had told them that they would not be amongst the first to land but he had promised that it would be French troops that would liberate Paris.

Leclerc and his troops landed at Utah Beach, in Normandy, on 1 August 1944. Guillon, leading his tank unit, moved eastwards towards Paris and south of the Seine. He took part in the liberation of Neuilly-sur-Seine, which had been strongly defended by the Germans, and took many prisoners.

Then the Leclerc armoured division moved eastwards towards the Vosges, towards Strasbourg and Germany. The French flag was raised over Hitler's eagle *éclaire* at Berchtesgaden on 5 May 1945 and some French troops were able to wander among the Führer's library and gramophone-record collection.

For some of them it was a remarkable journey that they had made from the heart of tropical Africa. For Guillon, although he had not been present from the beginning, it was also an achievement which he described in his book *From Carthage to Berchtesgaden*, written in his retirement (and published in Paris in 1978). He had served with remarkable officers, such as Leclerc himself, or the bold and adventurous Massu; he had been in training in Yorkshire with another naval officer, Philippe de Gaulle, and Montcorge, also known as Jean Gabin.

After the war he returned to the navy. From 1950, he served in Indo-China, where, as captain, he was in charge of a naval unit controlling the Bay of Saigon. This was of particular importance in terms of the war since the Viet-Minh were strong in the Mekong estuary. In more general terms it was important as the population in Saigon-Cholon rose to some two million in 1954 (it had been 300,000 in 1939) and the bay became the centre of great activity which had to be supervised by the French authorities. Guillon also had the particularly delicate task of evacuating the representatives of General Chiang Kai-shek from the interior of Indochina and of arranging their discreet evacuation to Formosa.

Back in France he was promoted, and as Rear-Admiral was in charge of a naval force in Lorient, which was ready for emergencies. In 1965, he was put in charge of the sites in the Pacific which the French government planned to use for nuclear experiments.

From 1969 to 1972, he directed the centre for the training of high-ranking staff officers in all services. With this conclusion to his career, Jacques Guillon had served in all aspects of hard activity, with the unusual addition of having been a distinguished fighting soldier.

- Douglas Johnson

Denise Levertov



Denise Levertov, poet: born Ilford, Essex 24 October 1923; Fannie Hurst Professor (Poet-in-Residence), Brandeis University 1981-83; Professor of English, Stanford University 1982-94; married 1947 Mitchell Goodman (died 1997); one son; marriage dissolved 1974; died Seattle, Washington 20 December 1997.

What characterises Denise Levertov's poetry is an untiring creativity, a freshness and sense of

urgency. She wrote lyrical, celebratory poems, and poems that found hard-hitting and appropriate imagery for the horrors of our times. Her work has a wide range, defying the notion that poets can be categorised as "nature poet" or "war poet". There is a consistent clarity in her voice and a sparseness in her language. She was a mystical poet who wrote assertively of the spiritual, and a political poet who continued to find images to make us think.

Levertov was born in Ilford, in 1923, and emigrated to the United States in 1948, the year after she married the American writer Mitchell Goodman. Her first collection of poetry, *The Double Image*, was published in 1946. Her 22nd collection, *Sands of the Well*, will be published by Bloodaxe in February.

She grew up in Essex and was educated at home by her Welsh mother and by her father, a Russian Jew who settled in England after the First World War and became an Anglican priest. During the Second

World War she worked as a civilian nurse in London. Her first book was published in England and when she moved to America she was published in Kenneth Rexroth's 1949 anthology *The New British Poets*. Rexroth wrote later that "she, more than anyone, led the redirection of American poetry... to the mainstream of world literature."

She was associated with the Black Mountain school, and during the next three decades she came to be seen as America's foremost contemporary woman poet. In the course of her career she held the position of poetry editor of the *Nautilus* in 1961, and teaching posts at Vassar College, Tufts University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, before becoming Professor of English at Stanford in 1982. She was a recipient of the Shelley Award for Poetry and elected to the American Academy in 1980. In addition to her many collections she published books of essays and autobiographical pieces.

It was her conviction in the intrinsic unity of the two aspects of her vision, the spiritual and the political, that gave her poetry its individual voice. An active campaigner for civil rights and against the Vietnam war, she described the evolution of her own political commitment in the introduction to her 1971 collection *To Stay Alive*, seeing herself as one of those who have come bit by bit to the knowledge that opposition to war, whose foul air we have breathed so long that by now we are almost choked forever by it, cannot be separated from opposition to the whole system of insane greed, of racism and imperialism, of which war is only the inevitable expression.

This conviction remained at the basis of her philosophy and she responded in her work to events in Chile and El Salvador as well as to the threat of nuclear war. She used a personal voice to reflect upon the public world, insisting upon poetry's role in protest and resistance.

There is an unselfconscious directness in her political poetry.

Her language is uncluttered. The Vietnam poems are angry, forcing the reader to confront the particularity of atrocity.

She is weeping for her lost right arm. She cannot write the alphabet any more on the kindergarten blackboard.

She is weeping for her lost right arm. She cannot hold her baby and caress it at the same time ever again.

Levertov's focus was always sharp. She showed how poetry can work to express horror without making it safe, how poetry can be both profound and lucid. A concern with exploitation and injustice runs through all her collections. What prevented her sense of the world becoming overwhelmingly negative was the articulation of a moral and spiritual faith. Her sense of our responsibility for war and suffering becomes a source of hope:

all of us are our brother's keepers, members one of another responsible, culpable and - able to change

Denise Levertov was an inspiration. Those to whom she taught creative writing, and those who heard her read her work, will never forget. Perhaps she has been a particular inspiration to the generations of women poets who follow her. She showed that it is possible to be serious and committed, to take on the large issues without losing the personal perspective. She moved effortlessly between spiritual tussles, reflections upon ageing, relationships, places, and world peace, always with the same precision, the same steady gaze.

SUSPENDED
I had grasped God's garment in the void but my hand slipped on the rich milk of it. The "everlasting arms" my sister loved to remember must have upheld my leaden weight from falling, even so, for though I clung at empty air and feel nothing, no embrace, I have not plummeted.

- Cynthia Fuller

MEANINGS OF CHRISTMAS

There is no edification in this massacre of innocence

The light of Christmas casts a shadow. One child was born but, as a direct consequence, many others were killed by Herod. Rawan Williams, Bishop of Monmouth, is impatient however with attempts to see significance in the suffering.

"O Almighty God, who... modest infants to glorify thee by their deaths..." I can't quite remember when I first realised that the Book of Common Prayer - which I love dearly - was capable of coming out with sonorous blasphemy; but I don't know what else you could call its Collect for today's commemoration of the Holy Innocents, the children massacred by King Herod in his attempt to eliminate the child Jesus.

God is not exactly being accused of engineering the deaths of these infants. But God is being represented as guilty of one of the most nauseating sins of our and other cultures: the sacrifice or suffering of children being colonised by some adult system of meaning and giving it a significance which makes it pos-

sible for us to contemplate it without horror.

It's the same phenomenon in Central Africa, in the armies of Laurent Kabila, or in the revolutionary guards of Iran and Iraq: children are conscripted into a bloody adult conflict, their pain somehow transfigured by an adult cause. Any offence against the integrity of the child is a kind of murder, subjugating the child to an alien principle or agenda: the abuser destroys children to glorify a particular kind of adult desire.

How does this basically differ from God turning a sickening massacre to edifying religious ends? The Book of Common Prayer rapidly escapes to the remote territory of metaphor, talking broadly about how we must mortify our vices and recover our innocence. This only makes things worse: the butchered child ends up as nothing more than a symbol for something else, for my moral problems.

A Christian at prayer ought to know better. One of the enormous and disturbing originalities of Jesus in the gospels is his insistent pointing to the child not as metaphor but as reality - even as instructor. Better not to be born

than to offend against "one of these little ones". You want to know what it's like to live in the Kingdom of God? Look at a child. Jesus is not sentimentalising childhood innocence. He is rather saying that the child is in the most serious and irreducible way an Other to an adult. The child doesn't share an agenda, perhaps doesn't even share a language, with adults; the child is simply there, a human reality that is not involved in adult rivalries and negotiations.

What matters about the child is her or his presence and difference, all at once. The child should strip us of the assumption that our agenda is the natural, the obvious, the authoritative one. Only when this happens, says Jesus, do we get any inkling of what the Kingdom of God might mean. To bring the child into our framework and our priorities is to destroy that otherness and so destroy something of our own possibilities of new life.

And while it may be easy to shake our heads over Kabila or the Ayatollahs, it is less easy to talk of the routine ways in which we pressgang children into adult fantasies and projects here in Britain - whether by exploiting the pre-teen market, making

sure that children are drawn in to the consumerist addiction as soon as possible; or by tolerating the social conditions that force the child into struggle and in some violent estate, or by the casual and knowing sexualising of the image of young girls by the beauty and fashion industry or just by the barbarous functionalism of so much of our educational rhetoric.

Jesus seems to say that the child must be left to be just that: an Other, whose importance for us adults is that they're not like us. And one consequence of this is that we have to resist the temptation to impose meanings on the sufferings of children; to let ourselves be nakedly shocked precisely because the pain that children experience doesn't let itself be used and processed into any of our systems.

No glorifying, then. I can't say the Book of Common Prayer Collect for today and I don't think anyone should. Perhaps confronted with the pain of the child is our only response should be to look - to shut up and look. And resist the temptation to try to make it tidy. Remember Dennis Potter's haunting remark, "Religion is the wound, not the bandage."

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS
JAMES Anthony (Tony), died peacefully at home on 22 December, aged 90; car. Death loved husband of Judy, adored and loving father of Charles, and Amanda, and a much loved grandfather.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, telephoned on 071-293 2012 (24-hour answering machine 071-293 2011) or faxed to 071-293 2010, and are charged at £4.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (notices, functions, forthcoming marriages, Marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

The OBITUARIES e-mail address is obituaries@independent.co.uk

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Changing of the Guard
TODAY: The Lord-Lieutenant of the County of Devon, the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. 1st Battalion Welsh Guards mount the Queen's Guard, at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am. 2nd Battalion Welsh Guards mount the Queen's Guard, at Horse Guards, 11.30am. TOMORROW: The Lord-Lieutenant of the County of Devon, the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 10am.

Birthdays

TODAY: Mrs Irene Adams MP, 50; Mr Hugh Arbuthnot, former ambassador to Denmark, 61; Mrs Anne Armstrong, former US ambassador to Britain, 70; Viscount Astor, former government minister, 46; Mr Christopher Benjamin, actor, 63; Sir Gordon Branson, company chairman, 76; Mr Gerard Depardieu, actor, 49; Sir Thomas Devitt, former rugby player and shipbroker, 95; Lord Griffiths of Fforestfach, vice-chairman, Goldman Sachs (Europe), 56; Air Chief Marshal Sir Derek Hodelstone, former Air Secretary, 80; Mr Mick Jones, rock musician, 50; Miss Pat Moss, former rally driver, 65; Professor Donald Northcote, plant biochemist, 70; Mr Mike Pender, rock singer, 55; Sir William Purves, chairman, Midland Bank, 64; Mr Peter Quail, rock musician, 54; Professor Brinley Rees, classical scholar, 78; Sir Norman Reid, former Director, Tate Gallery, 82; Dr Edward Salihouse, Master, University College, Durham, 62; Lord Sterling of Aldenham, chairman, P & O, 63; Miss Janet Street-Porter, broadcaster and writer, 51; Miss Polly Toynbee, journalist and broadcaster, 51; The Right Rev Michael Turnbull, Bishop of Durham, 62.

TOMORROW: Mr Intikhab Alam, former Pakistani minister, 56; Mr Terry Butcher, footballer, 39; Mr Donald Carr, cricketer, 71; Sir Ellis Clarke, former president, Trinidad and Tobago, 80; Major Madeline Crage, secretary, Imperial Cancer Research Fund, 52; Mr Thomas Gould VC, 83; Mr Max Hastings, Editor-in-Chief, the London Evening Standard, 52; Lord Hattersley, former government minister, 76; Noel Johnson, actor, 81; Sir Nigel Kennedy, violinist, 41; Mrs Frances

Morrell, former leader, ILEA, 68; Sir Patrick O'Connor, former Lord Justice of Appeal, 83; Mrs Bridget Prentice MP, 45; Mr Simon Raven, author and playwright, 72; Mrs Joan Radlock MP, 54; Dame Maggie Smith, actress, 63; the Right Rev William Westwood, former Bishop of Peterborough, 72; the Hon Geoffrey Wilson, former chairman, Delta plc, 66.

Anniversaries

TODAY: Births: Louis Pasteur, chemist and bacteriologist, 1822; Marie Curie, physicist and chemist (Dietrich), actress, 1901. Deaths: Charles Lamb, author and essayist, 1834; Howard Hoagland (Houge) Carmichael, composer, singer and pianist, 1981. On this day: J.M. Barrie's play *Peter Pan* was first performed, 1904. Today is the Feast Day of St Fabiola, St John the Evangelist, St Nicetaire and Saints Theodore and Theophanes Graptol.

TOMORROW: Births: Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington, astronomer, 1882; Deshaun St Francis de Sales, 1622; Rob Roy (Robert Macgregor), clan chief, 1754; Maurice Joseph Ravel, composer, 1875; Sam Peckinpah, film director, 1928. On this day: the centre portion of the Tay Bridge in Scotland collapsed, 1879. Tomorrow is the Feast Day of St Antony of Leirios, the Holy Innocents (Children) and St Theodore the Sacerdotal.

Lectures
TODAY
Victoria and Albert Museum: Patricia Baker, "Indian Temple Art", 2.30pm.
Tate Gallery: Laurence Brabury, "Portraying the World as It Is", 1pm.

17/LEADER & LETTERS

One more teenager makes no difference to the drugs debate



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So a cabinet minister's son has supplied cannabis to an undercover reporter. Big deal. Some will say that this means the minister should resign because he says one thing about drugs and a member of his family does another. This is nonsense. Others will say this affair shows that the drugs law is an ass and "proves" the case for legalisation. That is nonsense, too.

Ministers, like corporate bosses, newspaper editors, and others in authority, should resign when they have made a major error, or if they have been dishonest. But reversing the old business about the sins of the fathers being visited on the sons is a barney idea. Most parents of teenage children find it hard controlling them - think of Anne Atkins's daughter who ran away recently. But the children of politicians have a particularly hard time of it. Not only do their parents work punishingly long weeks, but they also have to put up with the constant needling and occasional sucking-up that goes with parental fame.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that there has been a long list of politicians' children who have got into trouble with drink or drugs. The wonder is that any of them grow up happy and successful at all. In the case being talked about now the boy has done nothing very heinous.

He was set up and fell - plopp! - straight into the trap. There is no suggestion that he had been roaming around the capital

luring innocent youngsters into a life of vice. As it happens, he is a decent, amusing young man who comes from a level-headed, very normal family. Like a vast number of people his age he has fooled around with soft drugs. Well, knock us down with the proverbial feather.

It changes nothing about our state of knowledge of the drugs question. He is surely allowed to try to cope with the consequences without it turning into a major national news story? For that reason, and because it is against the law to identify under-18s in court proceedings, we have taken a very low-key approach to the story. So have the broadcasters. Other papers, though, have used every hint, nudge and wink known to journalism to reveal the minister concerned, tectering, at least, on the edge of breaking the law in their anxiety to inform their readers.

Other than natural human curiosity the excuse must be that the son's behaviour is a matter of public interest, presumably because it would cause us to reassess his father's arguments. But the minister has not been hypocritical. He has not been "caught out". His son has done something he disapproves of - taking and dealing in drugs. He still disapproves of it.

Perhaps he feels more forcibly than before the truth that drugs are taken all over the place. But he knew that anyway. Indeed, overall, this story tells us: nothing es-



sential about the debate on the legalisation of drugs. For us, that is a subject close to home. Our sister paper has campaigned hard and honourably for the legalisation of cannabis. We remain, while intrigued, wholly unconvinced.

There is an intellectual case for the decriminalisation of all drugs, hard or soft, throughout the world, in order to destroy the profits which nourish international

crime. That would be a huge step, but it might choke off one of the world's biggest, most unpleasant and fast-growing trades. Some people would be lured into hard drug use by its new legality; but one would have to set beside their plight the fall in crime and violence that might result. It is a fascinating "balance of interests" debate, which has attracted libertarians of left and right, and has fuelled many arguments among everyone from the police to students. But it is academic: it would require decisive leadership by many countries which currently take the opposite view, so it has no prospect whatever of happening in the foreseeable future.

That leaves the lesser question of whether or not cannabis itself should be legalised. (It is worth noting, in passing, that if it was, the minister's son, being aged under 17, would still have been liable to prosecution.) We are not morally shocked by cannabis use. Whisky has probably caused more misery by far... though more pleasure, too. But there is a lot of force in the Government's argument that legalisation would simply increase consumption without cutting crime, since the big dealers and gangs would move onto the next swathe of illegal drugs.

In the end it would not, we believe, cut crime or make the streets safer, though it would please many users. Nor would decriminalisation stop dare-hun-

gry youths experimenting with dope: they experiment with cigarettes and spir-its all the time.

It would, by contrast, tend to make drug use more socially acceptable, particularly as people search for alternatives to cigarettes and alcohol, knowing more and more about the drawbacks of both. Heroin and cocaine are already widely used by young wealthy professionals. Many people believe we are on the threshold of a new era of highly sophisticated "smart" drugs. Cannabis, the ultimate doozy drug, is going to become less of an issue, as campaigns start for the legalisation of ecstasy and other new drugs.

So the question is, should the law continue to provide a barrier, however rickety, against drug use, or should we give up, acknowledging that drugs are too popular for politicians and the police to continue to meddle with?

No one can seriously say that the drug laws work. But legalising one drug would have little effect on the law and order questions; and legalising all of them in one country is too big a risk. Cannabis use doesn't involve high penalties, but should, medical exceptions aside, be discouraged. That judgement, not an easy one, is what matters. The behaviour of yet another teenager who wants to get under dad's skin is good gossip but otherwise entirely irrelevant.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pain for Asia

Sir: The International Monetary Fund is uncharacteristically humble in admitting it underestimated the severity of the East Asian financial crisis ("Chaos in Far East", 22 December). Even its sternest critics would allow some leeway on the hazardous nature of predicting the future; however there is no excuse for not learning the lessons of the past.

In East Asia the IMF is imposing extreme deflationary measures, in part to secure payments to foreign creditors. The same approach characterised its intervention in Latin America during the debt crisis of the 1980s. Today unemployment and poverty levels are higher in the region than they were 15 years ago. Hardly a rescue, hardly a blueprint for success.

Your report quotes the IMF's chief economist as saying that "some people are going to feel pain of this adjustment". The crucial question is how much pain and who feels it.

The degree of austerity being prescribed by the IMF is unjustified by underlying economic conditions. These are not Latin American basket cases of financial profligacy.

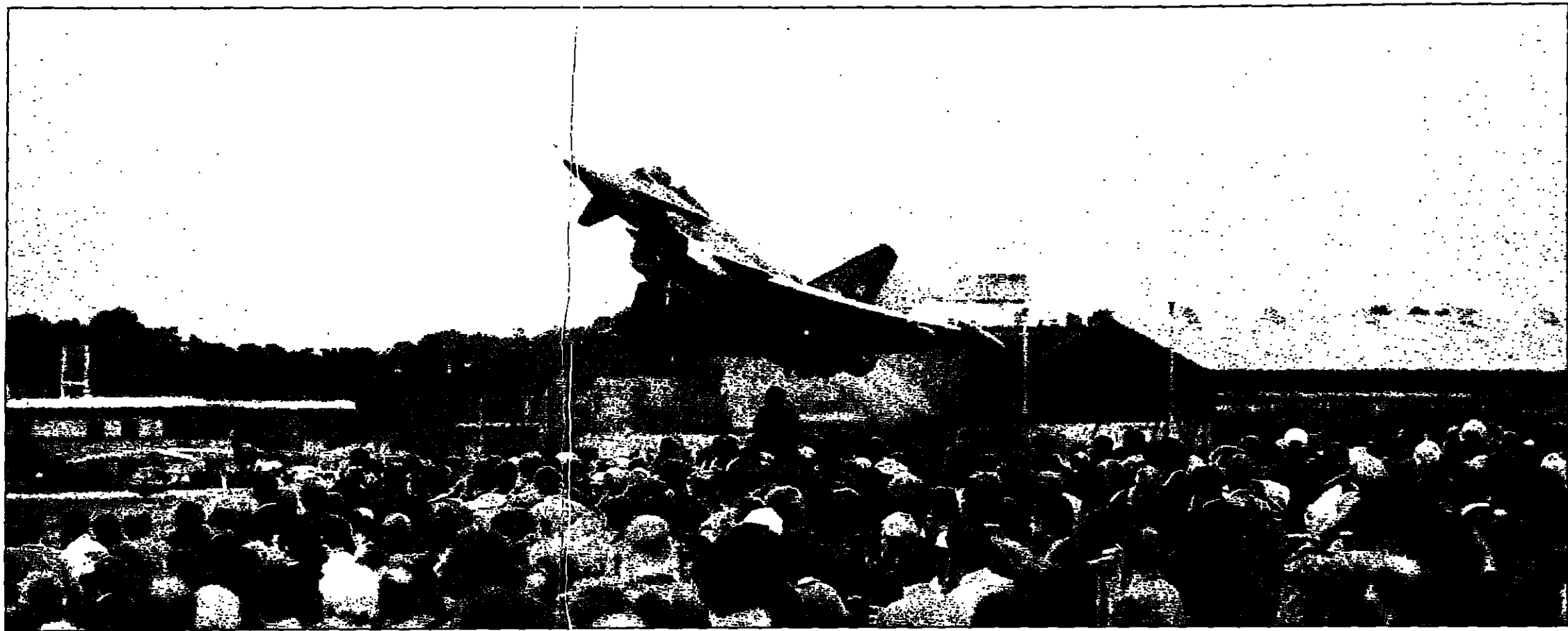
As for who bears the pain. The IMF has created a "risk-free" environment for foreign investors. No pain for them. By contrast, ordinary people will suffer the pain of mass unemployment and declining public services. In Indonesia, a country with 20 million people below the poverty line, the IMF is imposing an extreme austerity package in the midst of drought and rising rural poverty.

It is time the IMF was brought to account for its actions. It is also time that those poor people who will bear the pain are given the same hearing as those on Wall Street.
KEVIN WATKINS
Senior Policy Adviser
Oxfam
Oxford

Sir: If there is any meaning to Christmas at all, then your leader (24 December) need not apologise for visiting Seoul and Tokyo rather than Bethlehem. In the globalized economy they are also part of the world "family" and we neglect their current difficulties at our, and their, peril.

Korea and Japan have few natural resources. Both have made the only move open to them: to develop world-class economies, which is to live off their wits. They are the most highly educated nations in the world, which is why in the end they will pull through this crisis. The people themselves are the natural resource.

As a densely populated island ourselves, we have much to learn from them, and they from us. More even than your editorial indicates. Sadly, naive interpretations of the secrets of the Tiger economies have concealed the real lessons, which come not from superficial clichés (left-wing or right-wing) but from sus-



Eurofighter wows the crowds at Farnborough air show - but could its lack of Stealth technology mean the end of the special relationship with the United States?

Photograph: PA

Perils of Eurofighter

Sir: The financial extravagance of Eurofighter matters less than its radar reflectivity and the dilemma upon which this impales us.

Stealth is more than the reduction of radar echoing area; it is the virtual elimination of this, primarily by the application of the theorems of James Clark Maxwell. All warplane manufacturers can apply it; not easily, but they can.

Eurofighter doesn't, so is only marginally less radar-detectable than a Tornado. It could be shot down by a Stealth fighter without ever knowing one was nearby. Dare we trust America

this fundamentally? And, whatever the answer, other nations can build Stealth aircraft.

To be viable, Eurofighter requires anti-Stealth radar. This is feasible but technically formidable. Few could develop it. Outside America, we lead those few. We can recover the effectiveness of this vital warplane, that is too expensive to replace. Only, in so doing, we would vitiate a key US military advantage. With a deeply unfriendly act that must terminate the special relationship.

Eurofighter's radar-visibility forces us to compromise either our defence or our political posture.

NOEL FALCONER
Stockport, Greater Manchester

Sir: Although the Eurofighter was first developed during the Cold War, as more nations develop their military capability such an aircraft today is as essential as ever, as highlighted in Bosnia and the Gulf.

The issue of jobs is very important. However, it is not the case that the UK has agreed to produce the Eurofighter aircraft solely to keep 14,000 jobs. Technology used on the Eurofighter can be transferred to future military and commercial aviation projects, such as the Future Large Aircraft programme and the next-generation Airbus. By carrying forward this technology the UK can provide thousands of high-quality jobs with

a long-term future.

If the UK had ordered the American F-22 these UK jobs would be lost, and with them the technology which could be passed on to future generations. This would signal the end to the UK's military and commercial aircraft industry, and its position in the world market. Rather than investing in "flatpack" factories from the Far East, factories that can be closed down as soon as there is a drought felt in the market, surely it is better to invest in hi-tech industries which provide long-term jobs. Why squander this opportunity to invest in research and development when we hear so many observers claiming that

this is an area which the UK has traditionally neglected?
LINDSAY HOYLE MP
(Chorley, Lab)
House of Commons
London SW1

Sir: The Secretary of State for Defence is to be congratulated on his budgeting. His saving on four-and-a-half years' upkeep costs on the *Briannia* has freed us to buy 232 new Eurofighter jets instead of a mere 231. This will make all the difference to the defence of the nation's freedoms and traditions. Those traditions that are allowed to remain, that is.
HAMISH ALLAN
Edinburgh

tained cultural and social dialogue.

At this time of deep trouble, the UK has an opportunity to further rectify its relative neglect of this region compared with the USA. Paradoxically, now is the time to increase the UK involvement. Friends in need are friends indeed.
Professor DENIS NOBLE
Oxford

Santa's helpers

Sir: DJR Powell's letter (24 December) about the existence of Santa Claus has that spacious quasi-scientific quality of argument that one might expect from a person whose address is given as the "Atomic Weapons Establishment, Aldermaston".

Santa Claus does not need to bring presents to all the good Christian children. The responsibility is shared with the three Wise Men among others, depending on which Christian tradition the children belong to. actual distribution is not crammed into 31 hours but is

spread over a period between 6 December and 6 January.

In any case, as everyone except a nuclear scientist knows, Santa and his co-workers are capable of manipulating time.

A former member of CND, I am saddened to note that those active in the manufacture and propagation of nuclear weapons are still so detached from reality.
JOHN COSGROVE
Troon, Cornwall

Sir: Is Mr Powell a very sad man with no magic in his life or is he, perhaps, jealous of Santa's technology, which is clearly superior to anything dreamed up by those busy people at the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston?
DAVID STANSFIELD
London E3

Turkey's record

Sir: If Stephen Cox (letter, 20 December) spent less time reading the mealy-mouthed utterances of President Clinton and Mr Blair and more time reading history, he would know that the European Union has, indeed, made a list of "requirements" for Turkey's adherence before it would be admitted to the civilised nations of Europe. They were the promises that Turkey made, two years ago, in order to be admitted to the EU's Customs Union: Cyprus, democracy, human rights, Kurds.

For the past 200 years, Turkey has achieved the worst human rights record in the world. Turkey has massacred or otherwise mistreated the Albanians, the Armenians, the Bulgarians, the Cretans, the

Cypriots, the Greeks, the Kurds, the Macedonians, the Maronite Lebanese, the Montenegrins, the Romanians, the Serbs, the Yemenis. (If I have omitted any group, I apologise.) And, during these same 200 years, Turkey has always promised to behave. Whenever the Western countries have criticised Turkey, Turkey has agreed to mend its ways. Then, Turkey has continued to misbehave.
ANDREW KEVORKIAN
London W1

Southern discomfort

Sir: As a Northern girl I cannot let the gay community hijack the term "Southern poofs" as used in the Virgin video-game advert ("Computer game firms accused of inciting attacks on gays", 24 December).

As everyone up North knows, the term refers to anyone from the soft South, regardless of their sexual inclinations: it is absolutely not homophobic and anyone who thinks so is being just a little too

delicate (or assisting in the advertising campaign). If the advertising company did go wrong it was to use "Southern poofs" instead of the more widely used "poncey Southerners", which shows that their grasp of regional English is as weak as their grasp on reality. Where *The Independent* went wrong was to give space to such a non-story - but then (like the advertising agency) *The Independent* is probably full of poncey Southerners, a situation not offset by the presence of its strapping Jock editor. Ey up, 'ave I just stepped on somebody's sensitivities?
DEREK MAGRATH
Baileys, West Yorkshire

Sir: I can understand why some might be upset by the use of the expression "Southern poofs" in an advertising campaign. In the eyes of many of us, however, that part of the term which refers insultingly to sexual orientation is not the more offensive of the two words.
TOM VALENTINE
Darfield, South Yorkshire

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A year of windfalls, downfalls, mergers, break-ups, rising rates and white-knuckle rides on the markets



The year in question: (clockwise from top left) Ann Iverson; Carol Galley; Andrew Regan; the president of Yamaichi; Sir Peter Davis; and Nicola Horlick

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

- 1) What is the grand total for the emergency international loans put together for the troubled South-east Asia region in 1997? (a) \$50bn; (b) \$100bn; (c) \$200bn?
- 2) Which of the G7 leading industrial nations has the lowest unemployment rate? Which has the lowest inflation rate?
- 3) Who has to write a letter of apology to whom whenever he misses his target by more than 1 per cent?
- 4) How many building societies converted to banks this year and what were their names?
- 5) How many times have interest rates risen since Labour came to power?
- 6) Who publicly apologised after discovering thousands of his company's customers had died awaiting compensation for pension mis-selling?
- 7) Who is nicknamed "Stalin's Granny" and frightens the life out of miscreant life insurers?
- 8) What is the name of the mammoth City regulator launched this year and who is in charge of it?

BIDS AND DEALS

- 9) Which company failed to pull off the UK's biggest ever takeover after being outbid three times in the US?

- 10) Which bookselling entrepreneur launched an audacious £1bn offer for his former employer?

- 11) Who is Carol Galley, the Queen of Goldrush City, working for now and why?

- 12) Who was the former high school basketball coach who defeated the UK's biggest ever takeover bid?

- 13) Which two sets of banking initials were condensed into one?

- 14) Which aerial merger did Europe and the US threaten to go to war over?

- 15) Which famous drinks name disappeared from the stock market after 111 years?

- 16) Name another famous corporate name which was consigned to the dustbin after a fashionable demerger?

- 17) In a year when silly-sounding name changes became in vogue which companies were re-badged as Elements, Arriva, Arcadia and Diageo?

- 18) Which two supermarket groups were considering a merger only to find their nuptials disrupted before they could even start down the aisle?

ARRIVALS

- 19) Who swapped the high street for a top job at BT?

- 20) Which American woman was the surprise choice to run a very British conglomerate?

- 21) Which finance director switched from pharmaceuticals to defence electronics?

- 22) Which senior retailer risked accusations of nepotism when he appointed his 29-year-old son as a director of Next?

- 23) Which other Lord promoted his young son to the board of his carpet empire?

DEPARTURES

- 24) Which mother-of-five flew to Frankfurt in a vain attempt to save her bank job?

- 25) Who got the order of the boot after failing to revive the fortunes of an ailing retail chain?

- 26) Which investment banker lost his top job after a Greek trader's mispriced options cost the business £78m?

- 27) Which nuclear chief executive quit after being refused the chairman's job?

- 28) Which industry regulator announced he would hang up next year and search

for a new challenge? And where did he find it?

- 29) Which four-times married American woman conceded defeat and left her £1m-a-year job as chief executive of troubled Laura Ashley as her aggressive recovery plan ended in tatters?

- 30) After 38 years battling for Tesco, who retired from the supermarket giant to take up a top job in cricket?

- 31) Which computer television executive, dubbed "the brains of the box", left BSkyB due to his deteriorating health?

- 32) Name the South African who made a dog's breakfast of his petfood company and resigned as the group headed towards break-up.

- 33) Who retired for the second time as chairman of a house-building company?

BUSINESS IN SPORT

- 34) Which property tycoon won the battle for Nottingham Forest football club?

- 35) Name the Everton chairman whose Park Foods business had problems when its JD Spudgies potato snack flopped disastrously?

- 36) Which football club's owners have formulated plans to build the second-biggest

sports and leisure complex in the country after Wembley?

SCANDAL

- 37) Name the 31-year-old entrepreneur who together with his fellow bidders, was accused by a high court judge of "the clearest case of a gross, wilful and disgraceful breach of confidence" after his audacious £1bn break-up bid for the Co-op ended in failure.

- 38) Which blue-blooded investment bank backed the Co-op bidder, was later forced to apologise for its behaviour and ended up being sold to a French rival?

- 39) Who was filmed handing over confidential documents to whom in a Beaconsfield hotel car park?

- 40) Which book publisher discovered a £100m error in its US accounts?

- 41) The entire board of which Japanese securities house resigned in the wake of a racketeering scandal?

- 42) Which US investment bank was fined £350,000 for trying to manipulate the FTSE100 Index?

- 43) Who paraded in central London with placards describing National Grid as "National Greed" and why?

- 44) Scottish Amicable was the target of a three-way bid battle after its policyholders ditched proposals to demutualise from its own directors. Who won the bid battle?

QUOTE, UNQUOTE

- 46) Who arrived in a new job with the words "Have a plan, execute it violently and do it today?"

- 47) Who said, on getting the top job at a well-known high-street retail chain: "I know they say I'm a decrepit old fart from inside the company. But I'm not."

- 48) "Having stood alone for so many weeks taking all the flak, I am delighted that the true story surrounding the CWS is beginning to emerge.... The advice Galileo paid so many millions for... was inept." Who made this claim as his bid disintegrated amid a flurry of writs?

- 49) "It clearly would be unrealistic to look for a continuation of stock market gains of anything like the magnitude of those recorded in the past couple of years." Who said this nearly a year after warning the markets of "irrational exuberance"?

- 50) "This unexpected situation on our 100th anniversary is heartbreaking.... As a representative of the company, I am deeply sorry." Who wept as he said this?

ANSWERS

1. (b) just under \$100bn
2. Japan has an unemployment rate of 3.4 per cent
3. Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, to the Chancellor Gordon Brown
4. Prudential. The other bidders were Citicorp, Citibank and Chase Manhattan
5. Five times and they have gone from 6 to 7.25 per cent
6. Sir Peter Davis, group chief executive of the Prudential
7. Helen Liddell, economic secretary to the Treasury
8. The Financial Services Authority, chaired by Lord Hutton
9. BT, which failed to buy MCI after being outbid by WorldCom (now Verizon)
10. Lord Hutton, who was forced to resign after the 1997 election
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Wishing you many happy returns for the new year



NIC
CICUTTI

This being my last column before the new year, it seems only apposite to write about two things. One is a quick look at events that affected readers' pockets in 1997. The second is to make a few suggestions as to how 1998 can be made marginally more prosperous.

For savers, the year has been – let's be honest – a good one. Not only did high street banks and building societies raise rates on their accounts to levels not seen for three years or so but, with the notable exception of the Far East and so-called emerging markets, share prices also reached record highs.

This was in sharp contrast to predictions by gloom-and-doom merchants, who suggested 1997 would be the year in which "corrections" around the world would see a drop in share values of 10 per cent or more.

Anyone investing in UK tracker funds would have seen gains of up to 30 per cent in 1997, compounding similar growth the previous year. In the US, the Dow Jones

share index has recorded a similar uplift.

All the same, it makes sense to be a tad more careful in 1998. Now is the time to consolidate, looking at sectors less likely to be affected by an expected slowdown in the UK economy.

Indeed, the implications of events in Japan and their potential to spill over in the West mean that the gloomsters' warnings may simply have been premature and no more.

This means that – unless you are a very long-term investor, in for 10 years or more – now is definitely not the right time to invest in the Far East. It may actually be time to move out.

As for UK and European equities, far safer – if not as exciting – havens for your cash as the past 12 months have been, in our first few issues next year, our experts will be pin-pointing interesting investment areas to look at in 1998.

A warning, however: don't even think

about investing money until you have paid off existing credit card debts. Unless you are a financial guru, nothing will beat annual "returns" of 20 per cent or more gained by settling your plastic debt.

Meanwhile, mortgage borrowers have faced a torrid time in the past 12 months, with a succession of rate rises which will be expressed for many in the annual mortgage reviews they face in the first few months of the year. For someone with a typical £60,000 loan, the increases seen in the past eight months have added about £70 a month in repayment costs.

Nor is it likely that mortgage interest rates will come down swiftly in 1998. The answer must be to take advantage of some of the lower fixed and discounted rates now available and look not just two but three or more years ahead. It is still possible to obtain a four-year fix at 6.5 per cent and discounts of between 2 and 2.5 per cent on the current 8.7 per cent variable rate are around.

It wouldn't be right to leave 1997 without a glance at two changes set in motion by New Labour.

Labour's decision to remove the right to reclaim advance corporation tax on pensions means that anyone in a money-purchase occupational scheme or with a personal pension will see a severe shortfall in the value of their retirement income.

This invisible tax means that, according to some calculations, someone paying in £100 a month into a pension for the past five years, with 20 years to go until retirement, will see a drop in the value of his or her retirement fund of up to 10 per cent. To maintain its value, gross contributions should increase by £17 a month. This is clearly one useful new year resolution to take up.

Another is the ISA. The bottom line is that, assuming the £50,000 ISA upper limit remains unchanged, it makes sense to PEP up to the limit between now and April 1999, when the new regime comes in – particu-

larly for higher-rate taxpayers. Allowing Tessa to run alongside the ISA for the rest of their five-year lives means you should be tucking away any spare cash into a Tessa right now – or at some stage in the next 15 months.

Finally, a quick look at credit cards and instant access accounts. Competition is fierce and there are cards out there with rates as low as 10.9 per cent. Some of the better ones are from the Co-operative Bank, Save & Prosper/Fleming and Royal Bank of Scotland.

Lastly, if you have money parked in a low-interest bank account, my advice is to go shopping for a better deal – to Tesco, Sainsbury's or some of the direct account providers such as Standard Life Bank who now offer direct access account rates of 7 per cent gross or more.

That's it for now. To all our readers, a happy and prosperous new year. We hope to help you make it so.

£50m says this is the manager to watch

While history shows it is uncommonly difficult as a professional investor to beat the market averages over time, it can be done. Every once in a while it is good to see a new and exciting talent arrive on the investment management scene who threatens to do what scores of other professionals have failed to do before – and show a clean pair of heels to his rivals through consistently superior stockpicking. This week investors have bet £50m that they have found just such a new and rare talent.

The story behind the rise to prominence of Jayesh Manek, the man in question, would be hard to beat if it were served up as pulp fiction. He and his family arrived in England as refugees from Uganda in 1971. They started a small chain of pharmacies in west London and through hard work built it up into a prosperous business, which they still own. In his spare time Mr Manek started playing the stock market, beginning with a handful of privatisation issues before moving on to try his hand in other sectors of the market.

It was not long before he was hooked. Calm, thorough and thoughtful, he approached the subject as one suspects he does everything in life, reading all the books he could lay his hands on and gradually formulating a method for picking small growth stocks. His private portfolios did well – and then in 1994 he decided to enter a Fantasy Fund Manager competition run by a national Sunday newspaper.

As his way, Manek took the game seriously, made a series of multiple entries, and won the competition by a mile, turning his notional starting stake of £10m into £500m within six months. The following year he repeated his victory when the competition was run a second time. In all he ended up winning nearly a quarter of a million pounds in prize money.

Of course that was only a game and one which required

taking an unnaturally large degree of risk to win, given the short time span. But then in 1995 Mr Manek was offered the chance by the legendary investor Sir John Templeton to look after some real money – £5m of his private funds. Earlier this year, Sir John gave him another £5m to look after. And so Mr Manek, as delightful and charming a fellow as you could wish to meet, found himself a professional fund manager, running both his own and Sir John's portfolios from



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DAVIS COLUMN

the offices above the family pharmacy, Dallas Chemists in Ruislip High Street.

Now he has gone the logical final step and started the Manek Growth Fund, a unit trust which follows the stockpicking methods he has honed over the years. When applications closed last week, he had attracted £50m of new money to add to the £14.5m of Templeton money which will be rolled into the new fund and invested alongside it.

It is a remarkable sum to raise for someone who has never worked in the City and whose training was a pharmacy, not finance. For the time being, Manek will continue to plot his investment strategy from above the shop in Ruislip High Street.

How well will he do? Well, having spent some hours with Mr Manek above the pharmacy this week, I certainly would not bet against his building a formidable track record over time. Of course, running a unit trust with £65m in it is, after all, not as easy as running a couple of private portfolios – and doing so in the spotlight of daily

public monitoring is no picnic either. You can be sure that plenty of his competitors will be gleefully watching for any sign of his seeming to slip up. Add to that the fact that he is starting his fund in the mature phase of a long bull market, and the odds against success might seem rather high.

But Manek is unflustered; he is in the game for medium to long-term returns and argues convincingly that his style of stockpicking will continue to outperform the market even

when the current bull run comes to an end. For the record, he says that both the New York and London markets (and especially the former) are well above their long-run historical trend line: he calculates that the Footsie index needs to fall back to around the 4,200 – 4,300 level to get back on trend, and Wall Street could go all the way from 8,000 to 5,000 on the same basis.

But, like all the great stockpickers, Manek is not overly worried by the state of the market as a whole. He thinks most private investors spend far too much time fretting over the level of the market. What matters more is how well the few companies which you have picked are doing.

If the companies continue to deliver what they have promised, and the original decision to buy was right, over time the shares will continue to outperform the market.

Picking a good business, he insists, is the key to finding long-term winners – and the simpler the business, the more focused the management, the better he likes it.

Looking through the portfolio that Manek has been running for Sir John Templeton is interesting. It is highly concentrated, with the 10 largest holdings accounting for 90 per cent of the fund's value. The companies Manek favours are all relatively small growth companies, either turnaround situations (Anite, formerly Cray Electronics, is one) or pure growth stocks (such as JJB Sports, and the computer company Parity).

Intriguingly, the list contains several of the stocks that Jim Slater has also been finding with his price-earnings/growth rate methods, although the two men's investment styles are different in other respects.

Like Slater, Manek is keen on retail and leisure stocks and also service companies in the computer field. One of his general themes is that there is plenty of mileage left in buying companies which are now benefiting from the application of technology.

Banks are a good example. Boots the Chemist another – the latter, of course, from the business Manek himself knows best. He says the recent introduction of a distinct IT sector in the Stock Exchange classification system can only highlight the attraction of shares of this type.

Of course, now that he has so much more money to play with, Manek knows that he is going to have to move up into the ranks of mid-sized and Footsie stocks to fill out his portfolio. Although his fund will remain weighted in favour of smaller growth stocks, he is confident that he can find shares which can deliver strong performances in the upper reaches of the market as well.

Manek hopes to have completed the investment of his pool of money in fairly short order. He is a genuinely impressive individual and refreshingly open about his methods and ambitions. Definitely one to watch over the coming months and years.

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JOHN ANDREW

How to work out whether a firm's figures add up

Therefore, a company with a profit before interest and tax of £1m with a capital employed in the business of £5m, has a return on capital employed of 20 per cent. The fairest approach is to use the average of the capital at the beginning and end of a financial year.

When the cash flow from operating activities is less than the operating profit, creative accounting may have been employed. You should be cautious.





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Even if you are making an overpayment of more than £1,000, it is important to tell your lender in writing that you want this treated as a capital repayment. Get their confirmation in writing too. Mr Cartwright says: "If you just went in and paid £1,000 over the counter to your mortgage account, they would treat it as subscriptions in advance, which is a crafty way of not crediting that interest to you. A lot of people fall foul of that over-

Remember also that, if you have a *fixed-rate or discount-rate mortgage*, there may be *penalties for early repayment* which remain in force long after the offer period has expired. These will wipe out any benefits of overpayment.





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The return

Don't buy a BMW 3-Series, an Aston or an Escort. Unless you're a champion big discount. Along with many other ageing models, they are to be replaced by cars said to be significantly better. In Car magazine, other cars due in 1995 include a Land Rover Discovery, a Mustang and a Mercedes-Benz, a Renault Clio and a sun-roof equipped Beetle.

In for a long
stretch with
the grand
daddy of
them all

The return of the handsome conservative

Don't buy a BMW 3-series, an Astra or an Escort, unless you get a thumping big discount. Along with many other ageing machines, they are to be replaced by cars bound to be significantly better. As Gavin Green writes, other new cars due in 1998 include a Land Rover Discovery-busting 4x4 Mercedes-Benz, a Renault Clio and a stunningly revamped Volkswagen Beetle.



The first wave of new cars hits UK shores in the spring. That is when the new Volkswagen Golf and the Alfa 156 Car of the Year go on sale here, many months after hitting mainland Europe (where they are already on sale). The Golf is one of three crucial new mid-sized hatchbacks to go on sale in Britain in 1998. The others are the Astra, and the radically styled new Ford Escort.

The Astra, like the Golf, is a handsome yet conservative machine that will not offend Mr and Mrs Middle England, and should appeal to the fleet car chiefs who buy so many cars in the sector. Compared with the old Astra, which rode with the finessence of a billy-cart, the new one should have much more composed suspension. High safety levels will be a key feature.

The new Escort makes its debut in the autumn; sales are likely to start in October.

In keeping with recent new Fords (the Ka and the Puma), the new Escort will have stand alone looks. "Spy" photos suggest a very high tail, high tail lamps, a tall rounded roof, and a Puma-esque nose. Top-level ride and handling are said to be priorities as Ford, once known for sensible-shoes motoring, tries flair.

BMW has never been short of driving flair, although the styling is often unimaginative. The new 3-series, successor to the Yuppies' favourite, looks like a slightly up-scaled version of the current 5-series. This

"different cut of the same sausage" styling theme certainly helps give BMW a family resemblance, but it can get tedious.

The current 3-series really began the modern BMW styling theme. There were hopes that the new one would begin another. But photos of the new car make clear that it is from the same old mould. Never mind: the new car, as with most BMWs, is bound to drive brilliantly. It is launched at the Geneva Show in March. UK sales start in September, with 318i and 328i derivatives. A 323i follows soon after.

Coupe and compact hatchback versions come in a year or so.

BMW also has a big hand in the most important British newcomer of 1998 - the new-generation Rolls-Royce. The German company has supplied engines and other main mechanicals and, early next year, is likely to be confirmed as new owner of the Flying Lady, adding it to its growing British motoring portfolio, which now includes Rover and Land Rover.

The new Rolls gets BMW V12 power. It will be quieter, faster, more frugal and much lighter on its feet than the old Silver Dawn/Silver Spur, and probably even pricier. Sales start in late 1998. Order one, and you should not expect much change from £125,000. Also in late 1998, the Bentley versions come along. They will be powered by turbocharged BMW V8 motors. Unlike current Bentleys, the new models will look noticeably different from their Rolls cousins.

From the sublime to the sub-mini: 1998 will see a string of interesting new toys. Dae-woo, fast making a reputation for selling unimaginative cars in an imaginative way, launches its most interesting model - a Fiat Cinquecento rival - in mid-1998. Fiat hits back with its Seicento (600), which replaces the Cinquecento. It is marginally bigger, roomier, apparently nicer to drive, and more solid. UK sales begin in June. Volkswagen also ventures into sub-Polo territory in 1998, when it launches its Lupo baby car. It is based on the existing Seat Arosa but, given that VW owns Seat, moral copyright for



the concept belongs to Volkswagen. The Lupo looks more interesting than the rather dull little Seat, but should drive in a similar (and very satisfactory) way. Low running costs should be one of its strengths. The Lupo is due here in September.

A month later, a much more famous VW image reappears in Britain: the Beetle. Aimed primarily at the US market, where VW has been having a torrid time, the new Beetle looks like a 1990s iteration of the real thing. It has Hertie-like semi-

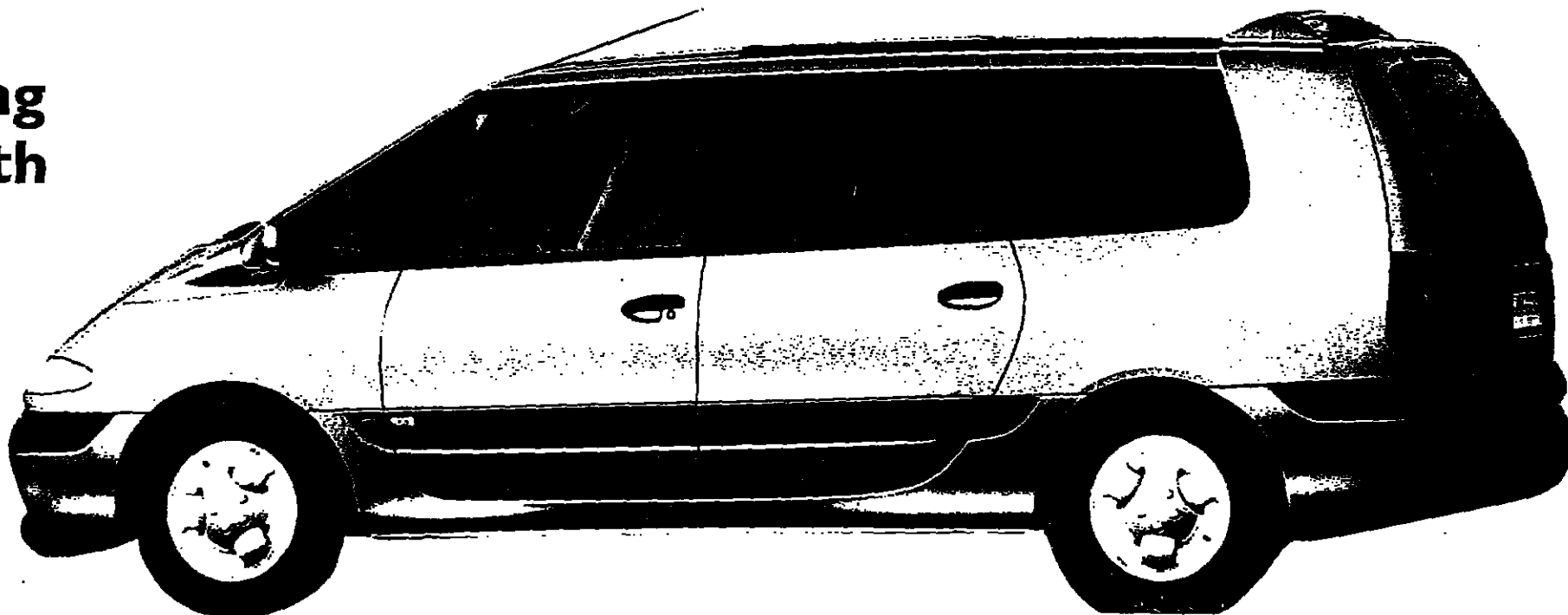
circular style, and a host of retro details. Underneath, though, lurks the (front-engine) mechanicals of a VW Golf. For everyday motoring, the (cheaper) Golf is probably a better bet.

Renault launches a new version of its Clio at March's Geneva Show. UK sales begin in September. The new Clio looks much curvier than the old model. Particular attention has been paid to the interior, where fabrics and trim are to a higher standard. There will be more cabin space, too.

The Mercedes A-class, fresh from an assembly line rest to cure its propensity to tip over, goes on sale in Britain in June. Robert Collin, the Swedish journalist who flipped one, has apparently driven a fettled A-class and managed to keep it on all fours. Changes include a new electronic handling and traction package, new tyres, and reduced ground clearance. Production recommences in February.

Less controversial, and more of an instant sales hit abroad, is the new Mercedes M-class 4x4. Built in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where labour rates are low and skill levels apparently high, the M-class is Mercedes' first stab at the Land Rover Discovery/Mitsubishi Shogun 'lifestyle' 4x4 market. Unlike the A-class, the M-class scores bullseye. It not only drives well on road, but is useful in the mud, well made, and looks good (in a chunky, butch off-road kind of way). UK sales start in the autumn, and both 4.3-litre V8 and 3.2-litre V6 models will be on offer. It will not be cheap, though. Prices start at about £35,000.

In for a long stretch with the grand daddy of them all



'There is room to open both seats out to make a bed or two. And you can store all five seats along one side, so you can take a long load and have space for people on the way back'

Renault will not let you take delivery of a Grand Espace until February, even though you could order one now. That is because production has only just begun. But as John Simister writes, it is a shame, seasonally speaking, that this extended Espace was not launched a couple of months earlier.

Popular people-carriers to date, such as the Ford Galaxy, the Toyota Previa and the normal Espace, contain one crucial flaw. Fill them with sufficient people to occupy all seven seats, and you have hardly any space left for their luggage. A narrow, vertical volume is left behind the rear-most seats, but that is not much use if everyone is bearing

gifts or bringing home booty. Worse, when you open the tailgate, you will be assaulted by a collapsing pile of brightly wrapped packages.

So, let me explain why the Renault Grand Espace can prevent the blessedness of giving and of receiving from turning into a curse. It is very simple. The Grand Espace is longer, by 10.6in, 6.7in of which is between the front and rear wheels and the rest behind the rear wheels. It does not sound much, but it almost doubles the available space behind the third row of seats.

Alternatively, if you specify the grander of the Grand's two trim levels (RXE rather than cheaper RFX), you will find, as in the top-trim standard-size Espace, that the five rear seats are mounted in channels which let them slide to the best position for the task in hand. In the Grand, those channels extend further back, so you can slide

Renault Grand Espace 2.2dT
Price: £24,240 (RFX), £26,340 (RXE).
Engine: 2.188cc, four cylinders, 12 valves, turbodiesel, 115bhp at 4,500rpm. Five-speed gearbox, front-wheel drive. Performance: top speed 111mph, 0-60 in 14.2sec. Fuel consumption: 31-36mpg.

Rivals:
Chrysler Grand Voyager: £24,995. Austrian-built, American-designed with big V6 engine and ample space. Lacks quality feel, and seating less versatile than Espace's. Mercedes-Benz V230 Ambiente: £25,240. Based on Spanish-built Vito van, and feels

it cavernous but crude, with very heavy seats. Not Merc-like at all.

Toyota Previa GL: £24,086. Biggest of the mainstream MPVs, old design but still deservedly popular. Capable of seating eight; no passenger exit from right-hand side.

the seats correspondingly further back and gain extra leg room. Even then, the remaining boot space is still greater than you would have in a standard-size Espace.

The extra channel length opens up other possibilities. There is now room to open both rows of rear seats out flat to make a bed or two, though that will only work if you remove the middle seat of the middle row and reposition the outer seats further inwards to align with the two rear-most seats. And you can also fit all five seats along one side, provided they are opened

out and then stored vertically, so there is room for a long load on the outward journey and space for people on your return.

Continuing the permutations, the seats can be reversed so passengers can face each other for picnics and other such social interaction, but you cannot travel with the seats thus disposed because the belts will be in the wrong position. Would it not have been possible to build the belt into the seat itself? It would, said the man from Renault, but the required reinforcement would make the seat much heavier and more awk-

ward to move. That is fair enough: most people-carriers' seats are hernia-inducing enough already.

That also means that the middle-row, centre seat has a lap belt only. But there is an ingenious panacea to this problem - the belts for the rear-most seats are long enough to reach that centre seat and anchor its occupant correctly. If you are

carrying six instead of seven, and you want all of them three-point-belted, you still have a choice of where to put them: two by two by two, or two by three by one which frees up a lot of extra cargo space because you can remove the redundant third-row seat.

The Grand's extended tail is also squarer, which gives extra rear headroom. And the ex-

tension does not do any noticeable damage to the Espace's road manners, although it would have done if all the extra bulk had simply been tacked on behind the rear wheels. Altering the wheelbase is a much more expensive solution, of course, because it has involved extensive redesigning of both body panels and understructure, but it was necessary to keep the Espace stable with big loads.

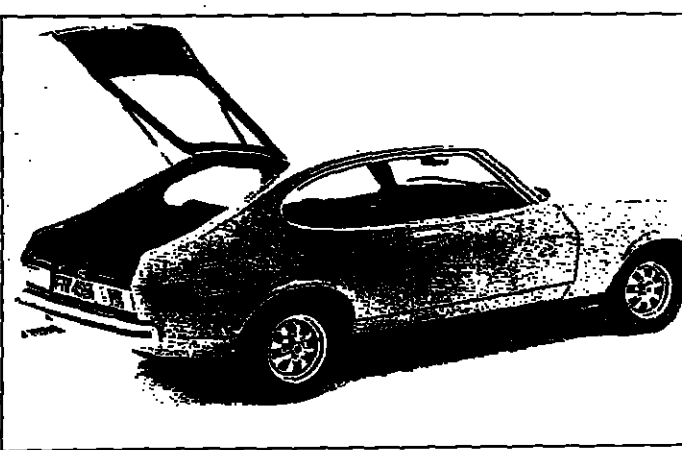
You are not particularly aware of the Grand's greater grandeur when you're driving it, apart from the fact that the rear window is noticeably further away. Performance remains adequate from the 2.2-litre turbodiesel engine with which it will be available initially (a notably quiet unit for a diesel), and

will no doubt be quite spirited with the 2.9-litre, 24-valve, petrol V6 that becomes available in the autumn.

Otherwise it's regular third-generation Espace: long-life credentials from its plastic body and galvanised sub-structure, a space-age cabin with digital displays and cavernous storage boxes, and a quality of fit and finish wholly unrecognisable to anyone who has lived through the propensity for spontaneous functional disintegration that has plagued its forward-looking but flawed ancestors.

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MY WORST CAR: FORD CAPRI/ ALEXANDRA BASTEDO



The biceps builder: the Ford Capri, loathed by Alexandra Bastedo, above

I have got a lot to be thankful for when it comes to Fords. They bailed me out when I was on tour by lending me a Cortina estate. It meant that four adults, a child and a dog could get around in relative comfort.

Then there was my first car, a terrible Popular which was held together with string. I think it struggled to 30mph and looked dreadful, but for a cheap first car that was all I could expect. I preferred that Popular to the really awful Capri I ran in the Seventies.

Part of the problem was that the Capri came after my favourite car, which was a

Triumph Spitfire. That was really fantastic, light, quick and a very pretty sports car. I imagined that the Capri would be just as sporty as the Triumph, but a little bigger.

It was certainly bigger, but that was not the problem. The first thing I did to it when I drove the Capri home to my flat in Mayfair was scrape one side of the car down a wall. It took most of the paint off. And it felt slow and cumbersome after the Spitfire.

The steering was dreadfully heavy which made it a nightmare to park. There was a huge blind spots at the back be-

cause of the huge roof pillars, and what seemed like a tiny rear mirror. I had a whole series of mini-prangs. I remember my brother borrowing the Capri not long after I had had the side panels remodelled and getting hit from behind.

Maybe it was a magnet for minor accidents. What made it even worse apart from the reluctant steering wheel were very stiff gears. It just added to the trauma of parking. And with a boyfriend and Doberman on board it felt a claustrophobic. I don't think I have ever hated a car so much. That Capri had to go.

All I had to show for it after a year were a lot of repair bills and huge biceps. These days I squeeze three Dobermans and a husband into a Honda Civic, but if anyone would like to lend me something bigger, I'd love to hear from them. Provided of course that it isn't a Capri.

Alexandra Bastedo starred in the States hit television series 'The Champions'. She has appeared in 'Absolutely Fabulous'. Her book, 'Canine Care & Cuisine - The Healthy Dog Book', is published by Robson Books. She was talking to James Ruppert.

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82 908	4,200	800 GJH	3,200	LJU 88	800	3333 SM	4,000
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642 CTU	800	840 GMD	1,000	1200	1,700	848 SMD	1,800
C 8689	2,000	84 RLD	1,000	100V 95	1,500	15 MC DONALD	1,500
458 CAC	1,400	840 545	1,400	100V 95	1,500	15 MC DONALD	1,500
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10 MC DONALD	1,800	84 32	2,200	100V 95	1,500	15 MC DONALD	1,500
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Move on up; you just might get the house you wanted

What do you do when your flat is too small? For most of us, the solution is to find a bigger place somewhere else. But as Fiona Brandhorst reports, the answer may lie just above, or below, where you live now.

Small and badly converted is how Janet describes the ground-floor flat she bought with her partner Chris seven years ago. So what possessed them to buy? The view, of course. Their flat overlooks a green and pleasant hill tucked away in a conservation corner in Brockley, south London.

So when space or rather the lack of it was coming between them and their weekend guest list, they decided to move up in the world instead of out, by buying the flat above. "When we heard the owners were moving out to the country, we immediately said we were interested," says Janet. "Chris works from home and really needed his own studio so it came at the right time."

"Friends thought we were mad buying by instalments," ventures Chris. "We worried whether it would be easier just to buy somewhere else."

They had to have both flats surveyed for the mortgage and the surveyor valued their original flat at £15,000 less than they paid for it (bought after the "lunatic period" of the late Eighties). "We were a bit concerned at the time," says Chris, "but in retrospect he did us a favour." It meant they bought the top flat for a good price and it was still a cheaper option than buying a "whole" house around the corner (without the all-important view).

However, they encountered opposition from their mortgage lender. "They couldn't understand what we were trying to do," says Chris. "They kept saying we'd need planning permission, even though the borough architect said we didn't." In the end the appropriate certificates were issued, albeit unnecessarily, just to satisfy the lender.

"The council tax people were also confused but it was just a question of moving up a band." Buying the freehold from the original developer was an important part of the plan. In the end it was purchased jointly with the owner of a third flat also on the ground floor.



It was only after the sale went through that the hard work started. A non-load bearing wall dividing the hallway for access to the two flats was removed. This revealed an 18 inch difference in ceiling height, lower in Janet and Chris's flat, for fire regulations.

"From then the project slowly snowballed," says Janet. Curious to know if any of the original mouldings had been covered up, they removed the suspended ceilings. None were found but it gave them the chance to resite doors and redesign rooms.

"The mess was incredible," says Janet, "but at least we could escape upstairs to a complete flat while the work was being done." And they speak highly of their builders - "no radios, swearing or shouting" - just the usual copious cups of tea. To save money Janet and Chris did much of the decorating themselves. "I've become a dab hand at making good," says Janet, "with plenty of advice from the builders."

No structural changes were required to the upstairs flat, which has provided four further rooms and a bathroom. The former kitchen is soon to become Janet's studio. "It was strange having stairs again," she says. "We haven't unified the plumbing and electricity yet," says Chris, "so we still have separate bills for each flat. The gas people just can't understand it's one house - we've had the meters read three times in the last six weeks."

Overall Janet and Chris are delighted with the results. "When you spend most of your life living and working as we do at home, it's important to get it right," says Chris. "We saved on the cost and the anguish of moving and a big plus was not having to use an estate agent."

Liz and Peter Norton bought the middle flat in a detached 1920s converted property in St Anne's, Lancashire, for a weekend base when visiting relatives nearby. When the larger, ground-floor flat came on the market as a repositioning they bought it as a rental investment.

"There seemed to be very little to do to it," says Liz, "so it made economic sense to buy it." The top flat was owned by a young woman and was the constant source

of noisy late-night parties. Sound proofing was non-existent and their tenants began to complain.

"When we arrived on the Saturday, we'd never know what sort of night we'd have," says Liz. Eventually, this flat was also repossessed and Liz and Peter made their move to own the whole house. "The flat needed total gutting and refurbishing before we could rent it out," says Peter. "It was difficult to co-ordinate the work when we were only there at weekends."

The Nortons set up their own management company handling the buildings insurance, maintenance of the common areas and external parts of the property, including the garden, and would like to buy the freehold. "Our solicitor has made enquiries but can't establish who owns the freehold, so we haven't paid any ground rent yet," says Liz.

Once the work was finished the idea was to sit back and enjoy their investment. However, Liz and Peter have found the level and cost of maintenance has been much higher than they expected. Shortly after buying the second flat, the communal stairway collapsed and the garage roof needed to be replaced. Repairs internally and externally are ongoing.

While they are pleased they can specify the type of tenants they want - professional couples, no children or pets and non-smokers - they have had long periods without rental income when the mortgage, council tax and utility bills still had to be paid.

"We bought the properties with variable-rate mortgages, but property prices and rental incomes have not increased at the same rate in the north of England as they have in the south," says Liz. "Even if we were able to sell the flats now we would make a loss." Ironically, if the property were to be returned to one dwelling it would command a higher price and would sell more quickly. "It would cost us upwards of £20,000 to convert it back, so it's just not viable," says Liz.

Buying the flat above or below may give you more space but not necessarily bring you any financial gain. While Janet and Chris have aspirations to buy the remaining ground-floor flat to complete their home, one suspects that when the price is right Liz and Peter will be beating a path to the estate agent's door.

Why inheritance is a family affair

Ageing parents, children, property and money can elicit duty and devotion. The combination can also lead to bitter conflict. At stake are assets which, if they don't go to the family, might well go to the tax collector or local authority. Robert Liebman suggests that families which encourage overall collective planning may find an avenue where devotion, obligation and self-interest converge.



Care begins at home: 'very sheltered' schemes exist for the elderly Nigel Hillier/UNP

Geographical and emotional dispersion and upheaval needn't mean familial disharmony. No sooner had Lily's strong-willed parents reached old age than they promptly divorced. Her father and sister remained in the north of England, settling in different nearby cities. Lily's brother moved overseas, and she put down roots in one part of London, her mother in another.

But the entire family pulls together when it matters. "My sister has been looking after our father, and I am taking care of our mother," says Lily. A few years ago, Lily's sister helped their now-90-year-old father move to a property in her city. This winter, Lily found and helped move her 82-year-old mother into a flat that is comfortable, convenient, and near Lily's own home.

For her mother's sale and purchase, a local solicitor's fee was £800. Instead, Lily instructed a bargain-basement solicitor, saved hundreds of pounds, and got the service she paid for: minimal, frustrating, and incomplete. But it did the job, even if an option to extend the lease is still pending.

"We don't mind paying taxes," says Lily, "but care might eat up everything." Their father has joint ownership of his property with his two daughters, and their mother and all three children own her flat.

Neither parent's property remotely approaches £215,000 in value, the current threshold for inheritance tax. But many people of seemingly modest means own modestly valued properties. Additionally, with healthcare thresholds at £10,000

and £16,000, almost all property owners must contribute to the costs of their own care.

Money is not the only or necessarily even the top priority, says Mark Spash, a Private Client and Estate Planning Partner at Piper Smith & Basham, a London firm of solicitors. "The first two priorities are to ensure that the parent gets a decent roof over his or her head, and has sufficient funds to run it." Beyond that, specialist financial planning works its own miracles.

Elderly people tend to underestimate their worth, and it is essential to accurately identify surplus assets, says Mr Spash. "A life or pension policy, for instance, may be assignable to a third party in the event of death. The elderly person can still receive income from the policy but in the event of death the capital sum can be assigned to a child or grandchild, which takes the policy out of the estate." If an elderly couple own a property jointly, "they should consider equalising their estates and gifting out their respective interests to their heirs, but do so in a manner that doesn't adversely affect the surviving spouse's requirements," says Mr Spash.

A healthy, elderly person today might start hobbling tomorrow, and Age Concern highlights practical questions. Does the new property have level thresholds or ramps for easy or wheelchair access? Are corridors and doors wide enough for a walking frame or wheelchair? Does the bathroom contain a walk-in shower?

Rental properties are available from many local authorities and housing associations that are purpose-built or have been converted expressly for the elderly. "Very Sheltered" and "Extra Care" housing schemes cater for elderly who are less independent than those for whom a part-time scheme manager would suffice.

Age Concern also advises elderly people to "not let your friends and relatives pressure you into a decision with which you are not comfortable. Where necessary, seek independent advice." The charity publishes a set of brochures which clearly cover all of the main legal and financial issues.

In addition to protecting assets, timely financial planning can help to ward off or soften other harsh blows. Julie, a freelance editor in London, plunged into a vicious cycle when age suddenly caught up first with her aunt and soon after with her mother. The sisters, both in their mid-seventies, took care of one another in Northamptonshire.

When her aunt developed Alzheimer's disease, Julie helped to arrange residential care and the sale of her bungalow. Several trips to Northamptonshire were required. But when Julie's mother had a stroke, the occasional trip was insufficient. Julie had to move into her mother's house to act as part-time carer, handle a mountain of paperwork, and maintain her own career.

"I always have work on, but I have no time to do it except in the middle of the night, so

my income has suffered."

This blow to her earning power occurred at the worst possible time. "I did not have a power of attorney over my mother's affairs, so I had to use my own savings. A good solicitor would have arranged a power of attorney in a matter of days, but our solicitor took five months."

Ironically, Julie and her mother, acting on the recommendation of the local carers' support group, had obtained a power of attorney for her aunt. "But when you are in the midst of one crisis, you tend not to prepare for another. It must be a defence mechanism," says Julie, who had been too overwhelmed to arrange a power of attorney over her mother's affairs.

Legal advice combined with financial planning needn't involve vast estates or complicated legal or tax issues. "A son or daughter can pay for and arrange a parent's lease extension and then, via a Declaration of Trust or mortgage, establish their respective interests in the property," notes Mr Spash. "The heir can receive the benefit of part or all of the flat's increasing capital value, and such increases can serve to reduce the size of the parent's estate and protect the financial commitment that the child has made in assisting the parent."

Age Concern England, 0181 679 8000; Cymru, 01222 371506; Northern Ireland, 01232 245729; Scotland, 0131 220 3345; Piper Smith & Basham, 31 Warwick Square, London SW11 2AF; 0171 828 8685.

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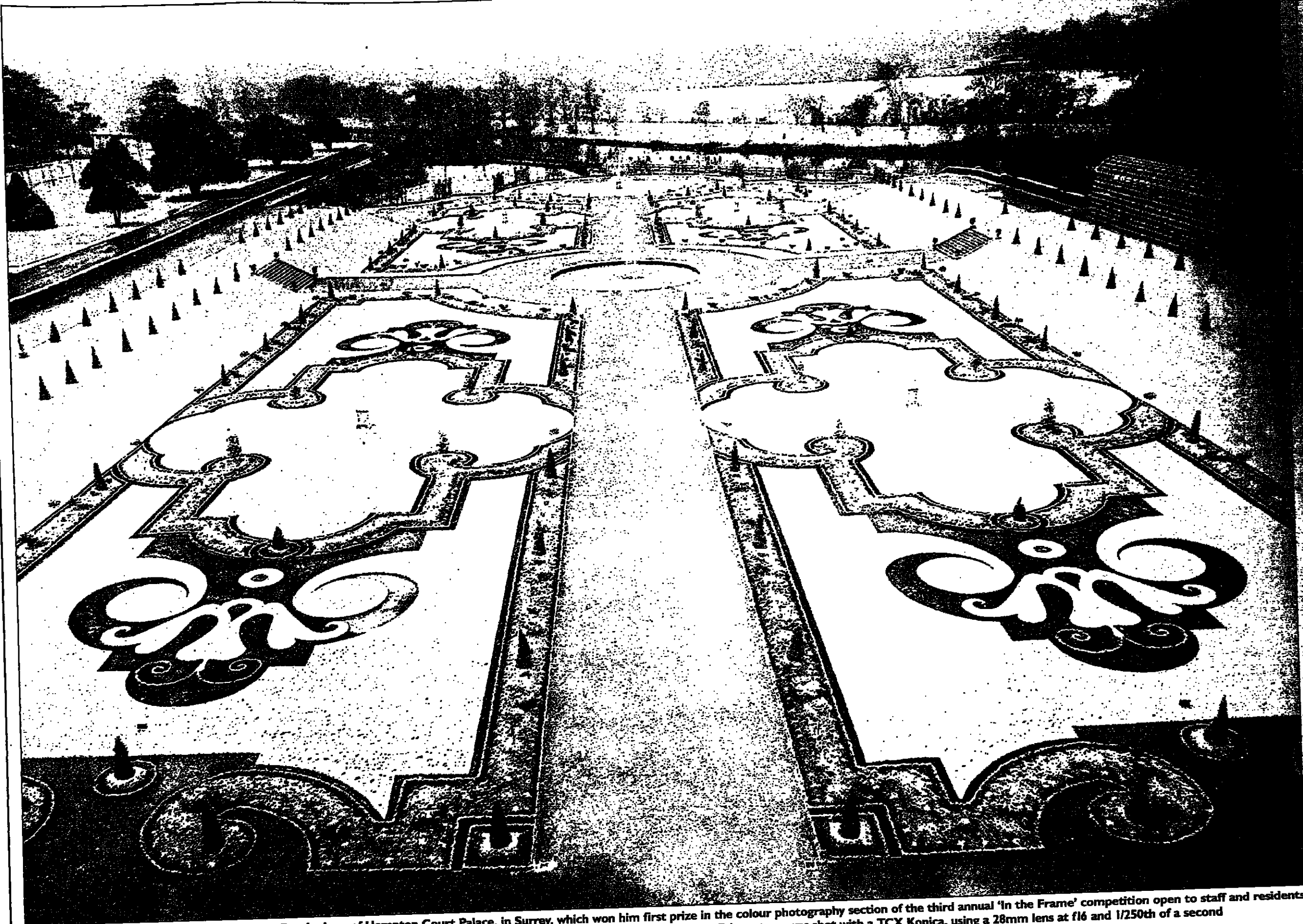
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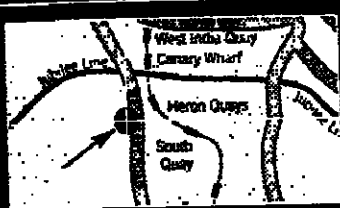
'Seasons of the Privy Garden', one of William Page's views of Hampton Court Palace, in Surrey, which won him first prize in the colour photography section of the third annual 'In the Frame' competition open to staff and residents at the historic royal palaces. Mr Page's shot of the recently restored formal garden, created for William and Mary in the late 17th century, was shot with a TCX Konica, using a 28mm lens at f16 and 1/250th of a second

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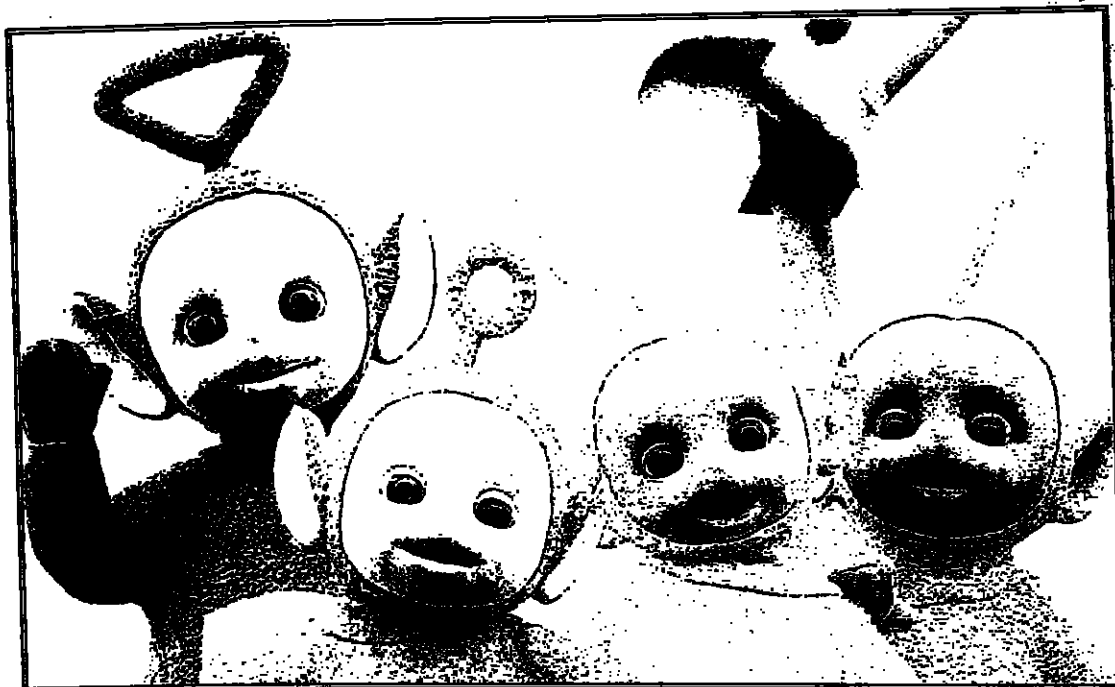
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1997: was it cool?

Find out in Real Life

1998: what does the future hold?

Find out in Section 2



TIME OFF

TRAVEL, LEISURE & SPORT

Saturday 27 December 1997



It's my party and I'll die if I want to: Torajan effigies gaze out over their ancestral lands - their clothes are laundered annually

Photograph: Eric Pasquier/Colorific

New Year's day of the dead

A strange, haunting culture; a boldly beautiful island - but, writes Harriet O'Brien, these were not the only ingredients that made New Year in Sulawesi so striking.

Death and renewal: that New Year the neat symbolism was almost flawless. The old year went out with the slaughter of pigs and buffaloes. By chance the new one came in with a resounding dance of regeneration. And in the midst of it all we became the bearers of great good fortune.

It was at the tail end of one December that we arrived in Tanah Toraja, a stunningly pretty region more or less in the middle of Sulawesi. This extraordinary, spider-shaped island lies north-east of Java in the huge, straggling archipelago that is Indonesia. Among the many ethnic groups on the island are the Torajans, or "men of the mountains", who occupy a large area that for centuries remained isolated because of its hilly, rugged landscape.

It was largely due to Tanah Toraja's remoteness that the arrival of Islam in the rest of Indonesia made little headway here. For the most part the people remained cheerful, pork-eating, palm-wine-drinking animists, although they acquired a thin coating of Christianity courtesy of Dutch missionaries around the end of the last century.

Very thin, you'd be forgiven for thinking. As foreigners living in Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, we had heard a great deal about the Torajans' elaborate funeral rites and eerie-looking effigies of the dead that stand, life size, looking out over ancestral lands. A decade or so ago the area was still

pretty much unvisited by tourists, so it was with a sense of pioneering zeal that two of us set out to explore.

At Ujung Pandang, the main gateway to Sulawesi, we hired a car and twisted our way through lush, jungly country of gigantic creepers and up sculpted hillsides of rice terraces to Rantepao, the Torajan capital and

a convenient base from which to visit some of the villages and grave sites of the area.

Traditionally, Torajans live in groups of longhouses. Perched on stilts, these look appealingly ethnic; the outside walls are finely carved and painted; the striking, neatly thatched roofs slope up to a gable at each end - symbolising, so we were told, buffalo

horns. And this, you quickly discover, is definitely buffalo country: such farm animals represent not just wealth but also enormous prestige. In each village it is easy to identify the headman's house from the large number of buffalo horns that are festooned along a central, outside pillar. The overall effect looks almost voodoo-ish - in total contrast

to the people who, when we visited, seemed genuinely delighted to welcome strangers.

You get a similar feeling at the Torajan graves, where on balconies, often set high up on limestone cliffs, models of the noble dead silently stare out at you. From a distance they look hauntingly sinister. On closer inspection you realise that far from

being grim, many look touchingly human. Some may seem a little haughty - but then these were rich people: it is only the wealthy who can afford the huge cost of commemorating their relatives like this.

Funerals, too, are expensive. Back at Rantepao, arrangements were well under way for the burial of a local nobleman. A long procession of people snaked up the roadsides, some bearing great bamboo cylinders containing palm wine, others leading large, compliant-looking buffaloes, and yet more carrying fat little pigs strung up between bamboo poles. Would we like to attend a day of the ceremonies, we were asked. No, no, we were told, you mustn't feel intrusive: this would be a big, public occasion.

And so it turned out: after all it wasn't as though we were bursting in on recent, private grief. The man had died some time before and a quiet ceremony had been performed, as is local custom. He had then been embalmed, his body preserved until his family could amass sufficient funds to give him a splendid send-off lasting several days.

It was quite some event. We joined several hundred guests in the large funeral enclosure which was presided over by the dead man himself, lying in a pavilion topped with a Torajan thatched roof. Several other pavilions had also been erected for the close family and honoured guests - of whom, it transpired, we were two. Feeling bemused by the sheer scale of the occasion, we were ushered into the women's pavilion where we sat on bamboo mats among other quietly chatting guests, and were offered betel nut and clove cigarettes presented in silver boxes. Meanwhile long lines of people

Continued next page

TORAJA REVISITED

How have tourism and, more pressingly, Indonesia's forest fires affected Tanah Toraja? Emily Drake returned there after a gap of 17 years.

There they were, as they had been in 1980, the effigies of the Torajan dead crowding the balconied ledges high up on the limestone cliffs, looking out over the fertile valleys they once farmed, as if lining the railings to view some great parade. From a distance they are amazingly life-like, and their clothing, laundered and updated annually, is as fresh as the skeletons in the nearby interment caves are fleshless with age. I almost felt that they were old friends.

When I first met them, Toraja Land had been far more difficult to reach and involved a car journey of at least eight hours from the port of Ujung Pandang. Now an airstrip has been made outside the principal city of the region, Rantepao. It is by no means a grand airstrip, being

both small and cliff-locked, but 12-seater aircraft make regular return flights daily from Ujung Pandang. Daily, that is, if there are enough passengers. Toraja Land was hardly seething with tourists this time, probably because publicity about the forest fires in Indonesia and the consequent smog had put them off.

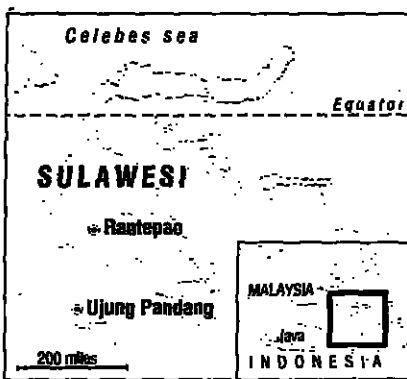
Arriving by air gave a birds-eye view of the country, with the great cliffs breaking through the rain-forest and the cultivated narrow valleys that lay between. There was no evidence of either forest fire or smog, but the effects of the drought afflicting most of Indonesia could be seen here in Sulawesi. There had just been a rice harvest,

which accounted for some of the brownness of the paddyfields. But the rivers and streams had dwindled to trickles, and the trees around the villages had lacklustre leaves dulled with dust.

The harvest of valuable Torajan coffee is likely to be small this year. However, the buffaloes appeared to be as enormous as before. They apparently found plenty of nourishment in grazing the reaped rice fields. From the roadside they looked like huge, inflatable toys, especially the two-tone jobs (baby pink and grey) which the Torajan people prize. Each one is worth about £40,000. Despite the increased accessibility of

this area, there is no aggressive development of tourist hotels. These are more numerous than before but mostly come in the form of chalets à la Torajan house. There is still no intrusive attempt to sell tourist tat, though every village has at least one house whose owner urges the visitors to climb the outside wooden stairs to the living-floor where local crafts are displayed.

What will have happened to the place in another 17 years? There is already more widespread availability of electricity; cables, even now, snake somewhat precariously along mountain tracks to reach remote villages. I hope the Torajan way of life won't be debauched by the impact of tourism. For now, life in the area appears, delightfully, to be almost the same as before. There was even another fortuitously timed funeral (timely for me, that is, not for the deceased) taking place with all the panoply of bright pavilions and colourful processions. And, of course, much parading of the sacrificial buffaloes and squealing pigs.



INSIDE CITY BREAKS Edinburgh/3 COMPETITION Beach Boys bonanza/5 SPORT PERFORMANCES IN 1997 THAT LOOK THE WORLD/18-19 GOLFS EMERGING SUPERSTAR Lee Westwood's golden year/17

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New Year's day of the dead

From previous page
were arriving with their gifts: the wine,
the pigs, the buffaloes.

Then we were taken to meet the chief
mourner, an event that remains a blur
in my mind since shortly afterwards we
were doubly honoured by witnessing the
sacrifice of the first buffalo. The great
grey creature was swiftly dispatched, his
head held back as a large machete was
plunged into his throat. In the back-
ground we could hear squeals as several
of the pigs met a similar fate. We
smiled as bravely as we could and tried
to feel fully grateful.

That evening, my head swirling with
visions of slaughtered beasts and images
of effigies, I crawled into bed at 9.30pm.
It was New Year's Eve.

The next morning our driver an-
nounced that he would take us "some-
where special". It was a day out that, in
typical sociable, Indonesian style, first
involved driving around town scooping
up assorted friends and relations. Where
exactly we were going, we asked, once the
car was cheerfully crowded with jolly day-
trippers? To see the most spectacular,
panoramic view in the whole of Indo-
nesia, we were told enthusiastically.

This seemed optimistic. The overcast
sky was darkening with rain clouds, and
as we headed up the hills the mist got
denser. The friends and relations chat-
tered while we glumly tried to imagine the
sight of magnificently terraced hills that
undoubtedly lay out there. Then the car
screamed to a halt and the friends and
relations tumbled out, excitedly crying
"quickly, quickly, we're in luck".

We followed them across the road, past
a village, and found ourselves in a grassy
expanse surrounded by an arcade cleverly
constructed out of palm leaves. In the mid-
dle of it were three poles decorated with
coils of cloth, a sort of maypole arrange-
ment around which women wearing chap-
lets of lilies and fantastic, heavy jewellery
were dancing to drums. This, one of the
friends whispered tremulously, was a
rare Torajan "white" ceremony. Two
headmen, we later discovered, had recently
recovered from severe illness and so a
thanksgiving celebration was in full swing.

We had only minutes to enjoy the
ebullient scene before the skies opened.
As large drops of rain started falling, the
poles were whipped out of the ground
and everyone scurried en masse. We
were swept along in the hurry and
fetched up at the village schoolroom, where
the assembled, smiling crowd
carefully began discarding the poles.

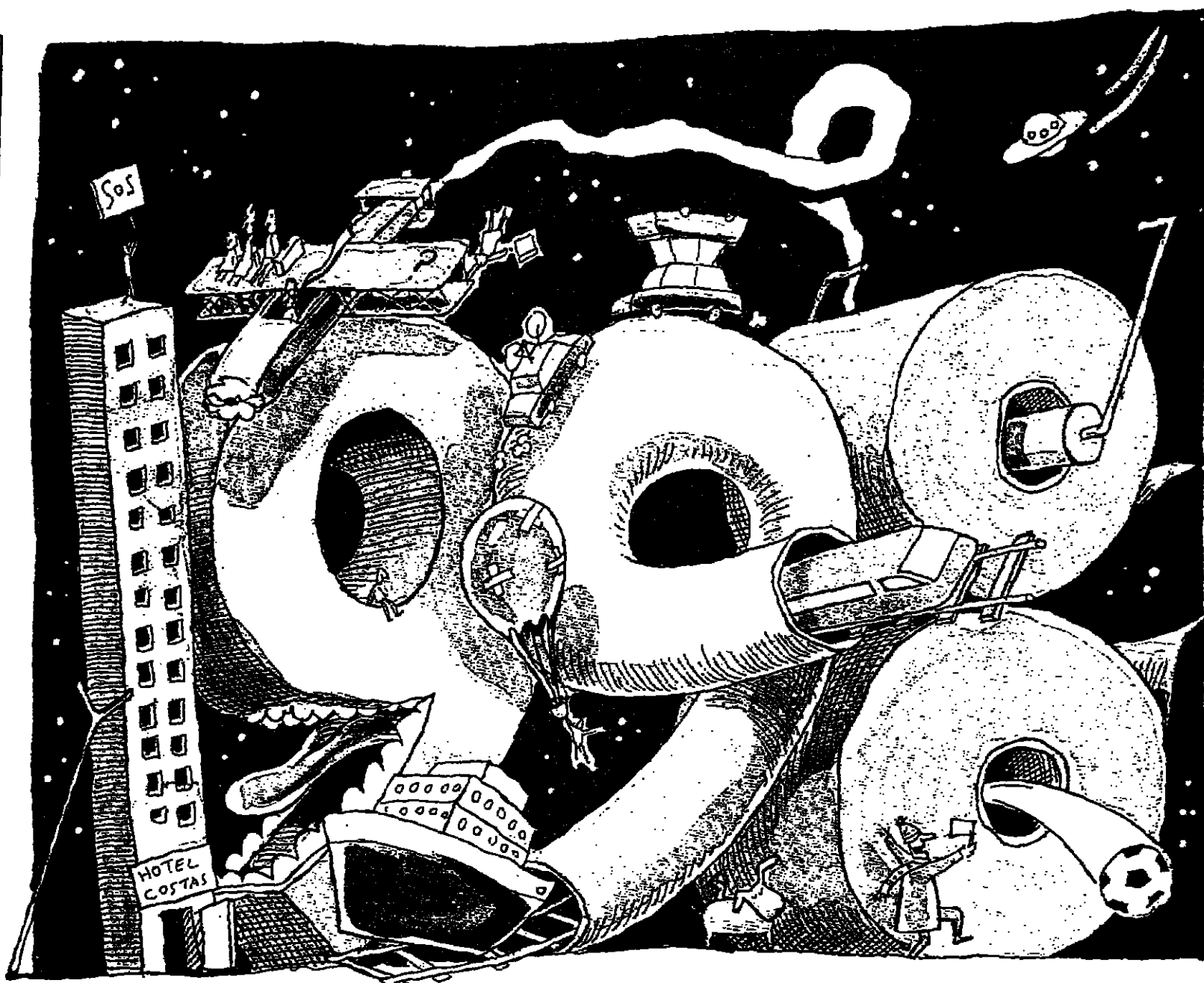
We were crestfallen: what a pity, we
said, that the celebrations had to end.
Not at all, one of the line ladies replied.
This is most auspicious. Strangers are
lucky, the rain is good - and, after all,
you brought it with you.

We never did see the view that day, but
it turned out to be a hell of a good year.

Getting there: there are no direct flights
between the UK and Sulawesi; the
quickest route is via Jakarta. Return
Heathrow-Jakarta flights on Garuda are
currently available for £495 through
Bridge the World (0171-911 0900). The
Jakarta-Ujung Pandang fare on Merpati
is £252 return.

Red tape: no visas are required for short-
term visits by British passport holders,
although passports do need to be valid
for at least six months.

Further information: Indonesian Tourist
Promotion Office, 3/4 Hanover Street,
London W1R 9HH (0171-493 0030).



1998 and all that

Yes, yes, yes, it's your global
almanac. Simon Calder gazes into
his crystal compass and reveals
what the new year holds in
store for travellers.

January

At the time when people are tradi-
tionally booking their holiday for the
coming summer, Airtours issues its
brochure for winter 2004/5, which fea-
tures holidays flying on yet-to-be-
invented planes to yet-to-be-built
hotels in countries that don't yet exist.

From a similar realm of fantasy, Na-
tional Rail Inquiries blames its failure
to answer even the simplest inquiry on
"the wrong kind of snow" - not intended
as a reference to poor-quality cocaine
inhaled by telephone staff.

February

P&O European Ferries and Stena
Line complete their merger on the
Channel crossing from Dover to
Calais. To compete more effectively
against Le Shuttle through the Chunnel,
the minimum check-in is reduced to
the time it takes to say the name of
the new company, which incorporates
all the proud pedigrees of the two lines:
Peninsular and Oriental Townsend
Thorsen European Stena Sealink
Viking Longboat Ferries.

Eurostar insists its four-year-old
promise to start services from UK
provincial cities to Paris will finally be
kept in 1998.

March

BA's new no-frills airline, EasyPeasy,
starts flying from Stansted to "Paris

South" - a disused military airfield out-
side Marseille. Its only competitor is
EasyMoney, Harry Enfield's new ven-
ture into the low-fare airline market. A
dozen stewardesses are disciplined for
wearing lacy underwear. A spokesman
explained: "When we said no frills..."

April

After intensive market research, Easy-
Peasy changes its name to Question-
Aire. Apparently the focus groups
thought this was one of the suggested
alternatives, rather than the title at the
top of the list of questions. A sugges-
tion that the two names be combined
as QuEasy was turned down on the
grounds of taste. All BA tailplanes are
repainted with a question-mark re-
placing the other questionable de-
signs.

May

The first anniversary of Labour's vic-
tory, during which London has acquired
the most expensive public transport of
any city in the world: some Tube jour-
neys now cost £8.25 per mile.

To celebrate the triumph, the
Deputy Prime Minister promises all
adult voters a Triumph - from a stock
of old Toledo models lying idle at a for-
mer British Leyland plant in the West
Midlands.

"No one seriously believed all that
nonsense about sustainable transport,
did they?" purred a departing John
Prescott as his ministerial Stig scattered
a constituency of cyclists.

When the summer railway timetable
comes into effect, National Rail In-
quiries continues to use the winter one,
blaming the wrong kind of glue in the
summer version. "Pages fall out of the
new one," says a spokeswoman.

"spreading leaves on the lines" (not a
reference to a habit involving a mirror,
a quantity of cocaine, and inhalation).

June

"Our best summer yet," is the verdict
of a leading package holiday operator.
"Providing we all hold our nerve and
aren't tempted to increase capacity,
there will be no last-minute bargains."
Six other package holiday operators
double capacity, and a week in the Med
falls to £49.

Eurostar says trains from Edin-
burgh and Manchester to the French
capital will be starting just as soon as
a British player wins Wimbledon and
England win the World Cup.

July

After the astonishing victories of an
out-of-form Greg Rusedski and an
out-of-retirement Sue Barker at the
All-England Club - topped by the
amazing mixed doubles triumph of
Virginia Wade and Sir Cliff Richard
- Eurostar says it has started running
trains from the provinces to Paris,
where Glenn Hoddle's boys have just
beaten Germany 4-2 after extra time
(and yes, that third goal did cross the
line). But since these are supposed to be
publicised by National Rail In-
quiries, they have yet to attract any
passengers.

August

The increasing strength of sterling
means that a cup of tea on the seafloor
at Margate costs more than a week in
the George V Hotel in Paris. No one
is in Margate anyway, due to the sum-
mer-long storms attributed to El Niño.
Airtours takes advantage of the dismal
weather at home to launch its 2025

brochure, headlined "Forget Margate
- try Mars".

September

Dreadful smog across South-East Asia
reduces the 26th Commonwealth Games
in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur,
to a single event: blind man's buff.

Meanwhile in Britain, crisis looms:
how to stem the disastrous slump in do-
mestic tourism?

Under pressure, the Chancellor in-
creases Air Passenger Duty 100-fold to
£2,000 for travellers outside Europe.

This triggers reprisals from Turkey
and the Dominican Republic, which im-
pose the same charge on departing
British holidaymakers. Thousands are
destitute, and forced to rely on dimini-
shing quantities of deteriorating buffet
food at all-inclusive resorts.

October

Richard Branson, who has been re-
markably quiet so far this year, launches
EasyBritFit - a no-frills, no-markings
airline that specialises in moonlit land-
ings in foreign airports to retrieve des-
titute Brit holidaymakers.

November

Chaos at Heathrow when a flood in the
salad bar of Burger King closes down
Terminal One; if it had only happened
a year earlier, it could have put out the
fire. Heathrow blames climatic changes
brought about by the wrong kind of El
Niño.

National Rail Inquiries denies that
any trains whatsoever operate in the UK.

December

National Rail Inquiries refutes its own
existence and disappears up its own
phone holding system.



SIMON CALDER

At about six o'clock this morning, Britain's rail-
ways should have slowly risen from their
Christmas slumbers; while most other countries
in Europe run a comprehensive service, in the
UK only the Garwick Express kept going. It is,
therefore, timely to return to a topic that has
dogged travellers all year: how are you supposed
to find out which trains are running? Mark
Broomfield, of Cheshire, was travelling home
to Helsby after a meeting in London.

"My train arrived in Chester at about a quar-
ter to nine and, according to National Rail In-
quiries (0345 484950), I could catch the 8.59
and get into Helsby 10 minutes later. The Rail-
track Internet site confirmed this view. But on
the train north from London I noticed that the
printed timetable said this was wrong - I'd ac-
tually have to wait for an hour and a quarter
at Chester, as the 8.59 didn't stop at Helsby.
The guard checked the main timetable, and
agreed that I'd have to wait.

"When I got to Chester, I asked the station
master where I could catch a bus. He said that
he rather thought the 8.59 did stop at Helsby.
The overhead monitors supported his view, but
on the other hand the departures notice
boards on the platforms didn't. When the train
finally arrived, two passengers and the sta-
tionmaster tried to persuade the driver and
guard (who didn't have Helsby on their dock-
et) to be the 8.59 to Helsby in a scene reminis-
cent of *Three Men in a Boat*.

"They finally agreed to stop at Helsby, and
our relief was only slightly dampened by a half-
hour delay, ostensibly due to mechanical prob-
lems, but actually (I suspect) to let smart-aleck
passengers know who was boss."

At least travellers to and from north-west En-
gland are benefiting from low fares - so low,
says Mike Stace of Tonbridge, that Richard
Branson actually pays you. "Virgin Trains" new
£19 return fare from Manchester to the cap-
ital is excellent value, but it is not the most re-
liable line in Britain." Mr Stace found himself
delayed by just over an hour. He wrote to Vir-
gin, and the company promptly sent him a
voucher for £20. So far he is a pound ahead,
with 368 "free" rail miles under his belt.

A similar story is told by Roger Hand of
Berkshire: "I travelled on a Eurostar train from
Waterloo to Paris which arrived 30 to 40 min-
utes late. All passengers were given a voucher
for an equivalent free single journey."

Mr Hand is a little concerned about the con-
ditions for the voucher: "It has to be used with-
in six months and is 'subject to availability'. I
expect I'll have to choose a wet Wednesday in
January if I want to take advantage of the of-
fer." As Mr Hand points out, though, "BA
doesn't do that".

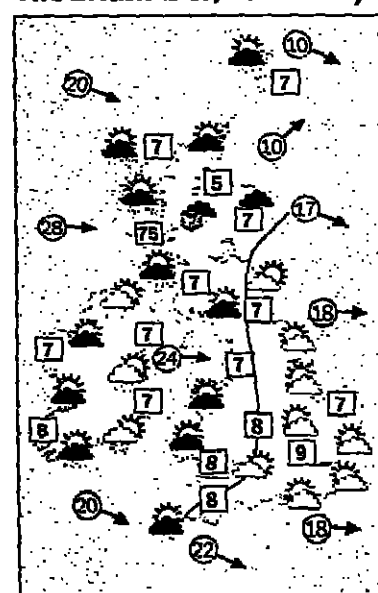
From obfuscation to omniscience. Helen
McWilliam, of the guidebook publisher Lone-
ly Planet, writes with a tale of two cameras on
her Emirates flight from Bangkok. "One cam-
era is fitted underneath the plane, and the other
in front of it. They are switched on at all times,
and are fed through as one of the options for
your seat-back video. You can watch the plane
take off and land, and in flight see what's be-
neath you.

"When I first realised I would be watching
the take-off from my seat, I thought it would
be terrifying. In fact it was very reassuring be-
ing able to see the view from the pilot's seat,
and it made the landing seem much smoother
than watching it from the side window. I re-
commend it to people scared of flying - it re-
ally makes the journey less daunting."

Wherever you travel in the coming year, may
it be safe, stimulating and satisfying.

WEATHER

The British Isles, noon today



most recent available figure at noon local time. C: cloudy; L: light; B: heavy; M: mist; R: rain; S: snow; V: very; D: drizzle

Abertillery	5.41	Cardiff	11.52	Inverness	5.41	Oxford	9.48
Anglesey	10.50	Carlisle	8.46	Leeds	10.50	Plymouth	10.50
Ayr	7.45	Corrie	8.46	Leicester	12.54	Scarborough	8.46
Belfast	9.48	Dover	11.52	Jersey	11.52	Shrewsbury	11.52
Birmingham	10.50	Dublin	10.50	Liverpool	10.50	Southampton	10.50
Blackpool	9.48	Edinburgh	8.46	London	11.52	Southend	11.52
Bournemouth	10.50	Exeter	11.52	Manchester	10.50	St Andrews	5.41
Brighton	11.52	Glasgow	5.41	Newcastle	5.41	Stornoway	4.98
Bristol	10.50	Guernsey	11.52	Nottingham	8.46	York	7.45

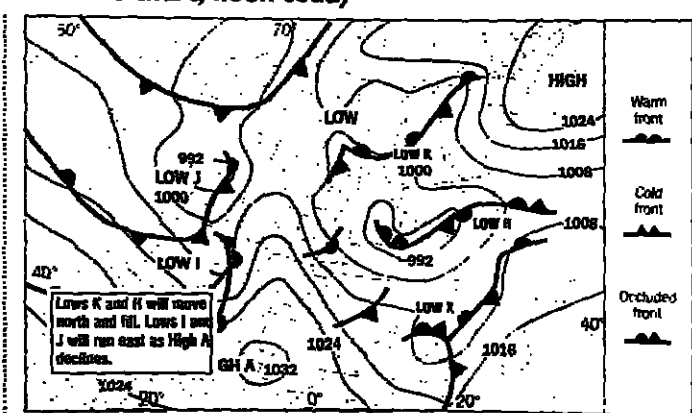
Lighting-up times

Today	Tomorrow
Belfast	16.03 to 8.46
Birmingham	15.59 to 8.19
Bristol	16.07 to 8.16
Glasgow	15.49 to 8.48
London	15.58 to 8.06
Manchester	15.55 to 8.25
Newcastle	15.44 to 8.31

General summary and outlook

Western Scotland and Northern Ireland will be rather
cold and blustery with showers, some heavy, and
they will be wintry over the hills and mountains.
Eastern Scotland will have fewer showers and longer
spells of sunshine. England and Wales will have
sunny spells and just a few showers, most of them
in western areas where one or two will be heavy.
Eastern and south-eastern England will miss most of
the showers and have the best of the sunny periods.
Sunday will dawn cold and frosty over much of the
country but it will be a mostly fine morning with
some sunshine and just a few showers in north-west
Scotland. However, the south-west will turn wet, and
rain will spread northwards through the day. Monday
will be wet and windy but milder; northern Scotland
should escape the worst of the rain. After a brief
drier interlude it will become wet everywhere later
Tuesday and into Wednesday with some heavy rain,
followed by blustery showers.

Atlantic chart, noon today



World weather most recent available figure at noon local time

Athens	14.57	Florence	7.45	New York	9.48
Auckland	24.75	Frankfurt	12.54	Nice	12.54
B. Aires	28.84	Geneva	13.55	Nicosia	17.63
Bangkok	32.80	Glasgow	18.64	Paris	13.55
Barcelona	14.57	Helsinki	2.28	Peking	9.48
Beirut	16.61	Hong Kong	22.72	Prague	6.43
Berlin	7.45	Istanbul	9.48	Rangoon	21.88
Bombay	10.50	Jerusalem	14.57	Riyadh	18.64
Buenos Aires	11.52	Johannesburg	24.75	Rome	11.52
Burkina Faso	11.52	K. Lumpur	15.59	Stockholm	2.36
Cairo	18.64	Lisbon	15.59	Sydney	1.25
Cape Town	21.70	Madrid	8.46	Taipei	25.77
Cardiff	11.52	Manila	16.61	Tel Aviv	5.41
Christchurch	18.64	Montreal	15.59	Vancouver	10.50
Copenhagen	7.45	Moscow	25.78	Warsaw	8.46
Corfu	15.59	Munich	11.52	Washington	9.48
Dublin	8.46	Osaka	11.52	Wellington	11.52

High tides

Location	AM	HT	PM	HT
London	11.59	6.3		
Liverpool	9.24	8.5	21.44	8.5
Avonmouth	5.09	11.7	17.30	11.9
Hull (Albert Dock)	4.21	7.8	16.46	8.0
Greenock	11.07	3.2	23.08	3.1
Dun Laoghaire	9.50	3.7	22.11	3.7

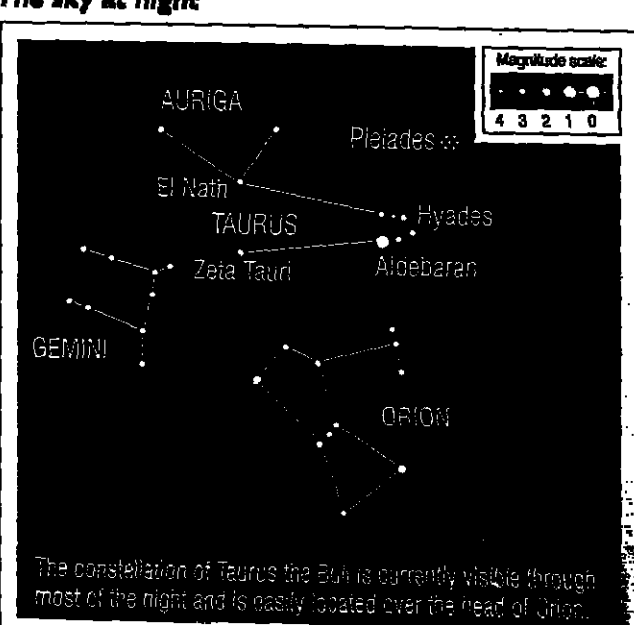
AA Roadwatch

London. A1 between Watford Way, Mill
Hill Circus and Friers Corner. Car-
nages reduced to two lanes for long
term roadworks. Until 31st May 1998.
West Yorkshire. M1 J43-J42 Stourton to
Lofthouse (M62). A contraflow and a
50mph speed limit are in place until 13th
July 1998.
Somerset. M5 J22-J23 Highbury to
Bridgwater. Motor roadworks due to
bridge repairs. A 3 mile contraflow is in
place until 31st March 1998.
West Midlands. M6 J6 Birmingham
Long-term roadworks. Northbound entry
up to the M5 North closed at Salford Cir-
cui. Diversion in place.
West Yorkshire. M1 J43-J42 Stourton to
Lofthouse (M62). Contraflow and speed
limit are in place until Jan 31 1998.
Greater Manchester. A56. Old Trafford.
Roadworks. Until 19th January 1998.
London. A111 Blackwall. Underpass
contraflow. Until 15th April 1998.
Bristol. M5 J18-19. Contraflow in op-
eration across the Avonmouth Bridge with
a 50mph speed limit. Regular rush-hour
delays. Until 1st January 1999.
Kent. M2 J1 Rochester Roadworks with
various lane closures. Until January
1999.
Kent. M2 J5-7 Sittingbourne to Bentley
Comer Lane closures. Until March 1998.

Out and about with AA Road-

watch call 0336 401 for the latest local
and national traffic news. Source: The Auto-
matic Association. Calls charged at 35p per min
(cheap rates 45p per min for other areas, inc
vat).

The sky at night



The constellation of Taurus, the Bull, would perhaps be more ap-
propriately named "The Bull's Head", since this celestial creature has no
stars to represent its rear half. Prominent over the broad of Ori-
on, orange Aldebaran marks the Bull's Eye, while the next two
brightest stars, El Nath ("the butting") and Zeta Tauri, are the
tips of his fearsome horns, charging straight for Gemini. A spring-
time of stars noticeable around Aldebaran are members of the
nearest star cluster to the solar system - the Hyades. Located
only 150 light years away, it looks large and scattered compared
with more distant clusters. The brightest members form a V-shape
visible to the naked eye, roughly on the Bull's nose. Appropri-
ately, the Hyades were the mythological half-sisters of the Pleiades
they shared Atlas as their father. Aldebaran's association with
the Hyades is a mere illusion. Though by chance in the same line
of sight, it is only half as far away.

Jacqueline Mitton

Photograph: John Voos

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5/COMPETITION

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 27 DECEMBER 1997
5

I've been all around this great big world

Fun, fun, fun – for the travel pages' traditional seasonal competition this year, we celebrate the beach, and the Beach Boys, with a singalong quiz.

Answer the 23 questions below, amuse us with your tie-break, and you could be in the running for a couple of the freebies we have received over the past year but cannot accept. First prize is an inflatable sun bed, second prize a special pair of Oscar + Dehn eye shades (ideal for long-haul flights to Californian beaches); these lucky people, plus three runners-up, will win Lonely Planet's USA Phrasebook, containing crucial information on surfspeak (eg surfer's nipple – wear and tear caused by wave action – and TV parking, where a space for your T-bird becomes available just when and where you want it – so named because it only happens on TV). Wouldn't it be nice?

The questions are arranged into several groups, most of which can be answered with reference to a compilation of Beach Boys greatest hits and a good map of the US – except questions 13, 14 and 15, which may oblige you to interrogate someone with vague recollections of the Sixties and Seventies. But in a spirit of seasonal generosity, everyone is allowed one "wild card" answer – write "God only knows" beside one question and it will be marked correct.

Californian and other girls
The first five questions in this section concern the song "California Girls". It features the geo-sociological strata of female society in the US, including (a) Midwest farmers' daughters; (b) Northern girls; (c) East Coast girls; (d) California girls; (e) Southern girls. The answer to each is from (a) to (e).

1. Which group keeps their boyfriends warm at night with the way they kiss?
2. Are hip?
3. Really make you feel all right?
4. Knock me out with the way they talk?
5. Comprise the cutest girls in the world?

6. The West Coast has the ...?

a) San Andreas fault
b) sunshine
c) smackheads
7. And what sort of bikini is dug?
a) British
b) French
c) Itsy-bitsy-teeny-weeny-yellow-polka-dot

"Surfing USA"
8. Which County Line features in "Surfing USA"?
a) Orange
b) Essex
c) Ventura
9. Which beach doesn't feature in "Surfing USA"?
a) La Jolla
b) Brighton
c) Pacific Palisades
10. Which of the "Surfing USA" beaches in the Los Angeles area is furthest north?
a) Redondo
b) Manhattan
c) Sunset

"I don't know where, but she sends me there"
11. Where were the cotton fields?
a) Over in Oklahoma
b) Across in Alabama
c) Back in Louisiana

12. If you travel 100 miles west of L.A. and 50 miles east of Detroit, you end up with:
a) Heroes and Villains
b) Barbara Ann
c) Little Honda
13. Which zoo features on the cover of *Pet Sounds*?
a) San Diego
b) Regent's Park
c) Central Park

14. Is Sirioa
a) A legendary surfers' beach between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara.
b) The 1957 Plymouth car first driven by a 17-year-old Brian Wilson.
c) The acronym for Staten Island Rapid Transit Operating Authority – not a surfers' paradise.

"I can't wait to get back to the States"
15. In which London venue have the Beach Boys played?
a) London Arena
b) Crystal Palace Bowl
c) Shepherd's Bush Empire

16. Which Radio 4 travel programme is named after a Beach Boys song (or is it the other way round)?
a) Going Places
b) From Our Own Correspondent
c) Breakaway

17. Which Welsh valley is celebrated in the song "Help Me"?
a) Rhondda
b) Wendy
c) Dee

"I get around"
18. When faced with the prospect of driving up and down the same old street, do the Beach Boys get
a) bored
b) bugged
c) bugged

19. "Drinking all night, got into a fight" – but around which town did the crew of Sloop John B roam?
a) Nassau
b) Nantwich
c) Naples

20. Most of the Beach Boys recordings are on the Capitol label, whose headquarters famously resembles a stack of 45rpm records. But where is it?
a) Los Angeles
b) San Francisco
c) San Diego

"We'll all be gone for the summer"
21. The last name of one member of the Beach Boys is the same as a Dallas airport. Which?
a) Brian Wilson
b) Mike Love
c) Bruce Fort-Worth

22. "We'll have fun, fun, fun till..."
a) Her daddy takes the T-bird away.
b) Emission control regulations agreed at the Kyoto convention prohibit wasteful cruising in large cars.
c) The flight home on Virgin Atlantic arrives at Heathrow without fully functioning undercarriage.

23. Finally, from which song does the headline of this quiz come:
a) "Good Vibrations"
b) "California Girls"
c) "Lady Linda"

To enter, write your answers in the form 1a, 2c, etc., then tell us in 12 words or fewer (or more, if they are especially entertaining) which is the best beach the Boys never broached – and why.

Send your entry to Beach Balls, Travel, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, London E14 5DL, or e-mail to navel@independent.co.uk to arrive by Friday 9 January. Usual Newspaper Publishing plc rules apply. The travel editor's judgement is flawed but final.

RED CHANNEL

Rules that you may find surprising

"All UK residents planning a holiday in the Channel Islands should note that caravans and camper vans are prohibited on the islands" – Condor Ferries 1998 brochure (available from 01305 761551).

"Please note that for medico-legal reasons we regret we are unable to provide travel health advice over the telephone" – British Airways Travel Clinics (call 01276 685040 to find your nearest branch).

"Times shown in timetables, schedules or elsewhere are not guaranteed and form no part of this contract. Schedules are subject to change without notice" – EasyJet conditions of contract (0990 292929).

"All Inclusive Holidays: We and all hotels reserve the right to confiscate identity cards or bracelets from guests who misbehave or abuse the All Inclusive board basis" – First Choice Summer Sun brochure (0161-745 7000).

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Let's get together and do it again ... the Beach Boys are the key to Beach Balls, the travel pages' annual frivolity

GREEN CHANNEL

Inspired by the Beach Boys, on might want to get your surfboard for a New Year dip in our coastal waters. But ewes from Surfers Against Sewage (SAS) will make you sink again.

Unfortunately, current water quality standards only apply during the "bathing season" which runs from May to September. Outside these months sewage is often left untreated. Even during the

summer, however, our seas have rather a murky reputation. Three hundred million gallons of sewage are discharged into the sea every day via outfalls around the British coastline.

The most common infections caused by this pollution are ear, nose, throat and gastrointestinal complaints. Hepatitis A has also been shown to be a health risk to recreational water users, as well as ME (extreme fatigue syndrome). There are, of course, standards. But only 136 out of 763 statutorily monitored bathing waters reached

"recommended" status in this year's *Good Beach Guide* compiled by the Marine Conservation Society (MCS). Add to that the fact that 74 per cent of sewage-related illnesses reported to SAS originate from beaches that are given a "pass" by the government, and we really are in it up to our necks, so to speak.

Compared with the rest of Europe, Britain's sewage record is dismal. Most British beaches failed to meet the EC Bathing Water Directive's 10-year deadline to clean up its act, and Britain has been prosecuted by the European Court for two years running.

So is there no way out of this mire? Yes – and it's quite easy. Jersey, Wales and Yorkshire have all installed year-round ultra-violet disinfection systems, which SAS and MCS say should be standard for all coastal areas. This system is so effective that SAS insist that if you want to take a dip in British waters, it is safer to swim in the outflow of Jersey's fully-treated sewage plant, than on some of Britain's beaches.

Surfers Against Sewage 01872 553001

Sue Wheat

WORLD COVER

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6/SKIING

Yad Moss:
the St Moritz
of the north

If you're looking for skiing close to home, search no more, writes Joe Gilbert. The Cumbrian fells around Alston, just a 45-minute drive from Carlisle, are often thick with snow...

The old market town of Alston, the highest in England, gets cut off for a day or two most winters due to snow. These conditions have been exploited by Carlisle Ski Centre. The company runs a popular ski-resort at Yad Moss, eight miles east of Alston on the B6277 road to Bernard Castle.

"Most British skiers head for the Alps at the first opportunity," Paul Wensley, company chairman, says. "But it dawned on us how perfect conditions are at Yad Moss. We usually get snow on and off from November through to February. The constant cold and often the lack of wind keep the snow surface perfectly intact."

Yad Moss is a steep, 800m fell in one of the most remote and beautiful parts of the country, right in the heart of the area David Bellamy christened "England's last wilderness". The dramatic Pennine landscape is dotted with the remains of old lead mines and isolated farmhouses. The only visitors tend to be migrating curlews - and skiers.

Winter sportsmen began renting the fell from a local farmer a few years ago. Now the slopes have a drag-lift which can tow 500 skiers an hour up the steep, 600m gradient. The hum of a fell-top generator breaks the glacial silence and hauls 30 visitors a time up the icy incline.

"We've got four ski-runs of different lengths and gradients," says Paul Wensley, "and can comfortably take 300 skiers, though we've been getting more in recent winters because conditions have been so good."

The entrance charge is £8 per day including all-day use of the ski-lift with a 50 per cent reduction on becoming a member of Carlisle Ski Centre. When you consider the cost of a flight to Switzerland or Austria, you can see why Yad Moss is doing good business.

There's also a rough and ready quality to the place which is distinctly refreshing. Forget chic, après-ski bars and designer casuals. At Yad Moss, it's more a case of sharing a flask with a Cumbrian hill-farmer getting away from his sheep for a few hours. Yad Moss is open every

weekend of the season, conditions allowing, and the centre runs a phone-line giving up-to-the-minute information on the outlook for skiing. "Snow-falls are so heavy that the centre itself occasionally gets cut off," Paul smiles. "But snow-ploughs are available to clear the approach roads if necessary so access isn't usually a problem."

Because Yad Moss is so remote from large centres of population, local accommodation also tends to be of the homely kind. This again is an attraction to the visitor who really wants to get away from it all.

The picturesque village of Garrigill is the nearest community with comfortable bed-and-breakfast available at the only pub, the George and Dragon. Next door, the village shop doubles as a Post Office and also has several rooms available for B&B.

Garrigill is a good base for a weekend's skiing at Yad Moss with only a few minutes' drive between the two. The scenery is breathtaking with the dominant slopes of Cross Fell, at nearly 3,000ft the highest point in the Pennines, providing a moody back-cloth to the run.

A few miles north-west of Garrigill, Alston straddles the South Tyne and is another convenient base for a weekend in the snow. Alston is itself a lovely old town complete with steep, cobbled high street and quaint market cross. It's straight out of Catherine Cookson and recently made an ideal setting for the filming of *Jane Eyre*.

Alston has several pubs offering good B&B accommodation with dinner available in some. Rates are low in this remote spot and B&B in a family house can cost as little as £12 per person. You'll pay only a couple of pounds more at the Blueberry Tea Room on the corner of the market place. Built in 1603, its beamed interior and low white-washed ceilings are a delight.

Here the excellent cuisine includes local delicacies like Alston and Cumberland sausage, sticky toffee pudding and the obligatory full Cumbrian breakfast. These gigantic fry-ups would fill most people for the day, but after a couple of hours in the snow-fields of Yad Moss, don't be surprised if you feel like another.

Phone the Carlisle Ski Centre (01228-561634) before travelling to Yad Moss to ensure the outlook is suitable for skiing. For details on accommodation and transport phone the Penrith Tourist Information Office: 01768-867466.



Chamonix has always been nirvana to the Kurt Cobains of the ski world, but it is now adding customer friendliness to its repertoire

Photograph: Tim Hall/Skishoot

The one-horse town tackles tourism

Quirky, down-to-earth yet spectacularly thrilling, Chamonix is for serious skiers, writes Jane Slade.

The sudden rush of adrenaline begins long before arriving at the top of the cablecar. For me it starts just past the exit to Sallanches, off the Autoroute Blanche. That's when the glorious mooncape of lofty, barren peaks comes into view. My pulse continues racing up the tree- and river-lined mountain road towards the village of Argentière - the nirvana for snowboarding Kurt Cobain lookalikes and home to Les Grands Montets, one of the best ski areas in the world.

The magnetism of the Chamonix Valley, whose ski areas are strung out over a fragmented 20km, stems not just from its infinite variety of breathtaking scenery, or even its reputation as the climbing and skiing capital of the world. Here, there's an intoxicating sense of freedom.

Just an hour's drive from Geneva airport, Chamonix sprawls, large and lovely, at the foot of Mont Blanc. True to its quirkiness the town itself radiates from a central square and has just one set of traffic lights. It is worth taking time to stop and stare here, especially at dusk when the glorious string of mountains turns lustrous pink.

In contrast to the neighbouring Ital-

ian ski resort of Courmayeur, where Vivaldi and Veracini set the tone and style, the streets of Chamonix ring more of heavy metal: clanking ice axes and ski boots. Fashion gurus and foodies will be better catered for 20 minutes over the border, except for the Auberge du Bois Prin restaurant near the town centre, which offers fine food, a fabulous wine list and home-made beetroot crisps.

Chamonix is for those who live to ski, which is why it attracts so many ski bums. They come from all over the world, living in rabbit warren-sized apartments or camper vans. For years the valley has drawn eccentrics, rebels and misfits, many of whom came for a holiday and never went home. Yet the line is clearly drawn between natives and immigrants. For example, membership to the Compagnie des Guides de Chamonix is via a local birth certificate, which shuts out all foreign high-mountain guides, and many French ones, too. Rivalry is also intense between the official French ESF ski school, and private ones. Even the individually run ski areas have their squabbles: for the second year running, one of the big five is boycotting the valley lift pass system.

Not that the visitor would be aware of any of this unless he or she wants to hire a British high-mountain guide or ski in Les Houches, which has the best artificial snow cover in the area. But the legs of the first-timer will ex-

perience a culture shock, especially if they have been nursed on the beginner slopes of Méribel, enjoyed screaming along the empty motorways of Val d'Isère, and rested in the cosy hostels of Zermatt.

Chamonix is not renowned for its nursery slopes, giant motorways and guest-pampering qualities. Of course, it has all these things, including a ski club for tiny tots and a night-skiing slope at Les Bossons, but as Iain Clewer, marketing director of the lift company Satal, admits: "We know this is not a family mountain." Those who can't cut the mean terrain find solace on the kinder slopes of Courmayeur, a popular one-day excursion for Chamonix refugees.

And no wonder. Where else in the world can you find yourself staring death in the face within 10 minutes of setting down a glass of *vin chaud* - as you may if you take the high traverse at the top of the Bocharand gondola or the Pibouille chute to the left.

But Chamonix is not all serious steepies. It offers many less terrifying yet thrilling experiences, not least the longest run in the world. The 22km Vallee Blanche is reached via the spectacular Aiguille du Midi cablecar in the centre of town. This off-piste run is more of a visual sensation than a physical one, although your pulse may race as you walk over the narrow ridge at the beginning.

The skiing is easily managed by in-

termediates, who can enjoy a scenic cruise through a wide-open glaciated lake overshadowed by wicked white spires. The only trouble is that the terrain is punctuated with crevasses. A favourite story told here is about a chap who fell down a crevasse, but when his friends lowered a rope to get him out someone else came up instead.

The smaller, linked ski areas of Le Brévent and La Flégère are more suited to intermediates, as are the lovely, long, tree-lined runs of Les Houches further down the valley. Here you will find Chamonix's best motorways, which are only spoiled by the long drag lifts to get you back up again.

Less confident skiers should head for Le Tour, a bus ride up the valley beyond Argentière, which, although it can be a bit blustery, has gentle, wide-open pistes ending up at a smart restaurant cabin by the cablecar station.

Most good skiers never venture off the Grands Montets, where couloirs drop right down to the village of Argentière and where, from the top of the mountain, a cascading off-piste theme park beckons. With the promise of snow-making cover being extended over the next two years, even more of this giant will be skiable for longer.

Millions of francs are being spent on a five-year plan to improve facilities. Already a new wind-resistant gondola has replaced the slow, three-man chair. New this year is a 20m-long, 8m-high tunnel to allow skiers to re-

turn to the Lognon bowl from Pendant without having to scramble up the hillside. Also the stylish chalet-refuge which occupies a remote spot overlooking the Argentière glacier on the Variante Hotel trail is being revitalised, and will open this winter as a restaurant, later offering accommodation.

Chamonix may have been slow to react to market forces, but finally it seems to be getting its act together, having discovered the concept of customer service. A little more friendliness would be welcome, but devoted pilgrims love its old-fashioned, pioneering quality, and the fact that it hasn't sold its soul to tourism.

Jane Slade paid £99 to fly Swissair from Heathrow to Geneva, and stayed at the four-star Auberge du Bois Prin (00 33 450 53 33 51) in Les Moussoux, Chamonix, for £80 per night (two people, including breakfast).

Many tour operators offer skiing holidays in Chamonix. If you wish to organise your own trip, the closest airport is Geneva. EasyJet (0990 292929) has just begun flying from Luton to Geneva for fares starting at £115 return, including taxes. British Airways (0345 222111) flies from Gatwick and Heathrow, and Swissair (0171-434 7300) from Heathrow.

More information: French Government Tourist Office, 178 Piccadilly, London W1V 0AL, (0891 244123).

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HIGH ROAD

This month, Qantas celebrates the half-century of its "Kangaroo Route" between London and Sydney. When it was inaugurated in 1947, the world's longest scheduled air route took three-and-a-half days and cost the contemporary equivalent of £37,000 in first class. Today both time and price are mere fractions of the original: 22 hours, and £5,765.40 (including a range of taxes which did not exist 50 years ago). The

flight time is set to be cut still further, with a new track over the Himalayas and western China, which should give you about 50 minutes less time to enjoy the service.

LOW ROAD

If you want to take a really long flight these days, you could take the Philippines Airlines 723 from Heathrow to Manila - about 14 hours in the air. But, for Australia-bound

travellers, the advantage of changing planes in the Filipino capital could be considerable. The airline has just introduced entertainingly low fares for the April-June low season. From 16 April, a return to Sydney (or Melbourne, or Brisbane) through Australin (0171-734 7755) costs £535, with an optional stopover in Manila. Two conditions: the fare applies only if two of you are travelling together, and Sydney-bound travellers must pay £2 environmental tax.

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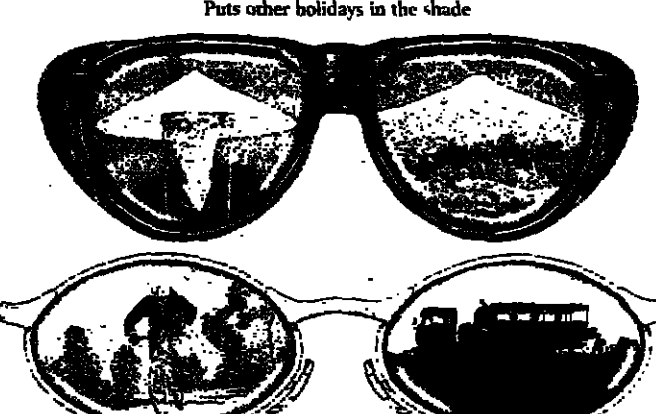
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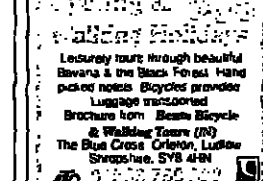
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A compost corner that reeks of defeat – but don't throw in the trowel just yet

Mistakes in the garden don't matter so long as you learn something from them.
Anna Pavord looks back at the tribulations – and triumphs – of the year.

The whole of the gardening year sits on our compost heap, each stratified layer as telling as those of an archaeological dig. Unpicking the heap, to spread compost thickly between all the currant and gooseberry bushes, I am forced to confront once again the mistakes I made, the plants that died and the monster hogweed that got away from me in the study border. The hogweed's thick, hollow stem is still unrotted. I bet its seeds are, too. Next spring I'll have a chorus of baby hogweeds sashaying down between the rows of fruit bushes, crooning "Every time you say goodbye, we die a little". But not enough, unfortunately.

Plastic plant labels turn up with melancholy regularity. That's a double trouble. In the first place, I should be organised enough not to put plastic on the compost heap. Then there are the ghosts of the plants themselves, hovering over the labels: *Catananche caerulea*, *Antirrhinum molle*, Tansy 'Isle Gold'. Gone, every one. Cold is what did for the snapdragon. I would guess. It's a species that grows naturally in Spain and Portugal but in our winters it wobbles on the edge of hardness. Damp probably killed off the catananche and the tansy.

So, as I'm cutting down the sides of the heap, and heaving the rich, dark, crumbly fruit cake mixture into the wheelbarrow, the compost releases memories of things I've forgotten. Like the little variegated myrtle 'Glanleam Gold' that I swept up in a garden centre. It dazzled me. I had to have it. Where to put it was a secondary problem.

Myrtles are used to having that effect on people. The common one, *Myrtus communis*, was one of the first foreign shrubs to be brought into this country. It came from the east in the 16th century, when gardeners were mad about "greens". 'Glanleam Gold' cropped up in an Irish garden as a chance seedling of a different myrtle, now called *Luma apiculata* and is a much more recent arrival. Each of its neat, small evergreen leaves is edged in cream, subtle but ravishing.

When I had brought it home, I consulted the oracle (WJ Bean's *Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles*): I sat, Buddha-like, in various parts of the garden testing for draughts, which myrtles don't like. Having found a spot on the bank that seemed safe equally from north or east chills, I dug in plenty of grit to improve the drainage and planted the dear myrtle, pressing compost sifted from the heap round its perfect rootball.

Then this summer, sailing along the south coast of Ireland, we moored off Valentia Island, hired some bikes and, quite by chance, found ourselves zooming down the entrance drive to Glanleam House, where a peeling sign had advertised "Garden Open Today". Buried in the subtropical Glanleam jungle, we came across the original 'Glanleam Gold', the very tree that Colonel Unmack, who then owned the place, had shown to the nurseryman Treseder just 20 years before. From that one tree comes every single 'Glanleam Gold' that exists here or anywhere else.

Unfortunately, mine doesn't any more. Exist, that is. Not my fault. I promise you. A sycamore inexplicably shed a branch on it and the remains were too sad to contemplate. The perfect rootball joined the rest of

the year's victims on the compost graveyard. But the more I learnt about myrtles, the more obvious it was to me that out on the bank, 'Glanleam Gold' was anyway unlikely to have staggered through the chill of a winter.

So, did anything go right this year? Yes, it must have done, or I would have thrown in the trowel by now. Or is it that the very act of gardening makes an optimist of you? Gardeners spend less time dwelling on past failures than on future possibilities. There's always another season ahead. This time, spring will be balmy. Rain will come on cue to water the newly sown vegetable seeds. There will be no sneaky frosts in May. Autumn will be long and languorous enough for the dahlias to dazzle even into November.

But the fact that nothing is ever the same for two years running is what makes gardening so engrossing. You bob and weave with the weather, you sniff what's in the wind, you begin to retrieve some of the messages sent by your instincts, or the few poor remnants of them that are left. "Getting in touch with yourself", the great cry of the Nineties, isn't about instincts. It's about narcissism.

Mistakes don't matter provided you learn something from them. What I learnt from the myrtle was that even down here in the South-west, where, for plants, the living is supposed to be easy, this myrtle needs the extra protection of a wall. My common myrtle is planted against a west wall, where it does well, flowering in summer with little white powderpuffs of flowers. I'm not going to buy another 'Glanleam Gold' until I can give it the same advantage. Or I could plant it in a pot and make sure it at least spent its winters somewhere reasonably protected, from sycamores as well as cold.

You can learn from things that went right, too – even if they went right only by default. In the week before Christmas, when Siberian winds were piling snow

When I planted that mahonia, I was thinking how it would look next to its neighbour, a late summer flowering *Hydrangea villosa*. I was thinking that an evergreen shrub would be a good thing to hold the space when the hydrangea's big leaves dropped off in autumn. I was thinking about a succession of flowering times, the mahonia picking up the baton, as it were, from the May-flowering viburnum on the other side. I was not thinking how it would look from inside the house on a dreary, snowy December morning.

The lesson has been learnt. In winter, because you spend so much more time inside looking out on the garden than you do in the garden itself, it is worth arranging a few

more happenings like the mahonia. If there had been a wall where the mahonia is, a jasmine would have given the same effect. A winter flowering cherry, *Prunus subhirtella autumnalis*, might do, too.

Though the colour of the flowers would be lost when it snowed. Buried in the compost heap were some tulip bulbs, frills of white roots already shooting out round the base plates of the bulbs. Guilt again. I must have inadvertently tipped them there when I was emptying a pot of old compost. Tulips never let me down. This last spring, flowering under the pergola I had the unsurpassed 'Weber's Parrot', each flower as outrageous as an 18th-century pop's

handkerchief. In the first week of March, *Tulipa pulchella* 'Persian Pearl' was already flowering on the bank, the backs of the fabulous magenta petals washed over with silvery grey.

This autumn I planted 15 different kinds of tulip in the garden. Many are in containers, where they do better than in our heavy clay ground. I like to think now of 'Prins Carnaval', quietly buried in a Chinese pot by the back door, preparing to leap out in mid-April with its yellow scented flowers elegantly feathered in red. Next year is going to be the best yet.



Flower plot: even during a bad year for the garden, you can trust your tulips
Photograph: Jan Ceravolo/
Garden Picture Library

against the wind, shamefully, I got the car stuck at right angles across the lane. The bumper was embedded in snow on one bank, the boot rammed into the snow on the other; the wheels spun merrily under me, getting nowhere. The hand brake gave up, exhausted.

When I finally got home, I stumped crossly upstairs to change. Framed in the landing window, exactly where I needed it at that moment, was the mahonia 'Lionel Fortescue' in full shining glory on the bank opposite. The jagged leaves were heavy with the weight of snow, but the spikes of yellow flowers, arranged in bunches at the tip of each upright branch, had managed to stay free of it and were burning like little torches against the monochrome backdrop.

CUTTINGS

Bacteriological warfare

Kenneth Fitchett writes from Corscombe in Dorset about problem pyracanthus, which have disappointed him for the past two years. "Flowers have given way to dead, black clusters of stalks and heads where there should be red berries. My neighbour's orange-berried pyracantha has laid on a magnificent show, protected from marauding blackbirds by a home-made scarecrow. Is there anything I can do with mine to ensure I get an equally good result next year?"

This sounds like fireblight (*Erwinia amylovora*), though Mr Fitchett does not say whether the problem is affecting foliage around the flower heads, which is what you would expect with this disorder. Fireblight is a bacterial disease which affects trees and shrubs belonging to the big family of the Rosaceae (that includes apples and pears as well as pyracantha and cotoneaster) and it is much more prevalent in the south of England than the north.

The bacteria is carried in on rain (or inadvertently on scatecours) and settles on pyracantha flowers while they are blooming. It turns them black, but the infection then usually spreads into the twigs themselves, causing the surrounding leaves to wither.

There is no treatment except the rather drastic one of cutting out the infected growths, well below the point at which the disease has taken hold. But it seems odd that Mr Fitchett's pyracantha is refusing to set berries at all. Fireblight usually attacks parts of a plant, creeping eventually to infect the whole. If the foliage is entirely healthy, and only the flower heads affected, then fireblight may not be the answer. Blossom wilt, which looks superficially the same, usually attacks only fruit trees. Could this be a new kind of blossom wilt which, like fireblight, infects other members of the Rosaceae? If spraying with a copper fungicide clears it up, then the answer is yes.

When, last year, I first wrote about Easton Lodge, the Edwardian Countess of Warwick's garden in Essex, restoration was already under way, guided and inspired by the new owner, Brian Creasey. The garden, originally laid out by the designer Harold Peto in 1907, had fallen into almost terminal decay. With the help of volunteers, Mr Creasey has now attacked the Italian garden, wrenching saplings from its formal balustraded pool, and remaking the stone containers where water lilies once floated. When light and air were let back into this part of the garden, seeds that had been lying dormant for years sprang up: the giant tobacco plant (*Nicotiana glauca*), the large-leaved vine (*Vitis rotundifolia*) and many mallows.

The garden reopens in February when there are sheets of snowdrops flowering in the Japanese glade. The forgotten gardens of Easton Lodge are at Little Easton, Great Dunmow,

Essex (01371 876979) and are open daily (11am-6pm) from February to October, admission £2.

Propagating plants, by sowing seed or taking cuttings, is not in itself complicated. But remembering what plant should be propagated when is too much for most gardeners to remember without a prompt. *The Complete Book of Plant Propagation* (Mitchell Beazley, £19.99) tells you just what you should be doing (once you get the hang of the symbols). It explains how long you have to wait, too, before roots are likely to have developed, and how long after that you will have to wait before the cutting is well enough established to plant out. I've just learnt that cuttings taken from side shoots of yew will never make leading shoots. That explains the oddly squat shapes of some yews in the new hedge.

Anna Pavord

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A rural melting pot

Only a couple of spectators were privileged to witness the latest performance of Andy Ball's fiery furnace – but a great show it was. Snow lay all around, the flue began to hoot and boom like the QE2 trapped in fog, and the roof caught fire in the middle of the action, so that everyone went away well satisfied.



Meltdown: Andy Ball's fiery furnace in Uley, Gloucestershire

Photograph: Tom Pilsten

A word or two of explanation. Andy is a quietly spoken, genial Bristolian, burly and bearded, and a man of many skills, not the least of which is playing the banjo. He is well known in west Gloucestershire as a musician, performing in bluegrass mountain bands and acting as an impresario for country music in general.

By training and trade he is a carpenter: he did a stint working for a packaging firm, then taught woodwork for five years in the Forest of Dean. When his marriage broke up in the Eighties, leaving him with no mortgage to service and no real need to work, he acquired an old gypsy caravan and went on the road in Dorset and Somerset – an experience that left him fascinated by horse-drawn carriages and caravans in general.

In search of work as a carpenter, he rented workshops on the back of the old brewery in the village of Uley, near Stroud, and settled down there to build horse-drawn caravans on traditional lines. His creations are works of art, no less, intricately painted on the outside, and models of comfort within.

The wheels consist of elm hubs, oak spokes and ash felloes (pronounced "fel-lies"), or rims. The upper works are of soft wood, the bowed roofs beautifully lined with pine. Inside there are bunk beds, a table, a chest of drawers and a miniature, cast-iron stove.

His practice is generally to build a wagon to his own liking, and to live in it until a buyer comes along. The last one went for £7,000, and if you place an order now, he

will deliver a model to your specification in about six months.

When the recession bit, in the early 1990s, Andy moved on to making old-fashioned hand-carts – and it was these that led, indirectly, to his present venture. Needing cast-iron wheel-hubs, and finding that no major foundry would make any for him, he heard that an old foundry-man in the nearby village of Cam, recently retired, had equipment for sale.

Hence the splendidly Heath Robin-

DUFF HART-DAVIS

sonian apparatus now installed behind the Uley brewery in an open-fronted shed of corrugated-iron bolted to a four-by-two framework. The furnace is basically a vertical cylinder, double skinned and thickly insulated, about 18 inches in diameter and seven feet high, open at the top.

The method of operation is hardly hi-tech. Wood is used to ignite a fire of coke in the bottom, and an electrically driven blower is switched on to fan the blaze. The raw material – literally any old iron, but smashed-up lorry brake-drums for preference – is tipped in from the top along with the combustibles.

"We get it going like stink," explained Andy, when I arrived to find the furnace roaring. "Then we chuck a charge of iron in, and when it starts running out molten from the bottom, we know it's up to temperature."

His commission, that day, was to cast three-pound iron pigs for Chas Wright, the brewer whose Old Spot ale circulates freely throughout the area. The moulds – wooden boxes packed with a mixture of sand and coal-dust – sat on the ground before the bellowing monster. Beyond them, a separate gas burner was heating up the huge, two-handled ladle which would pour the liquid metal – because unless that was at much the same temperature, the molten iron would explode on contact.

Suddenly a cherry-red trickle started to leak from the hole at the base of the furnace. "There goes the first charge," cried Andy. "Beginning to melt now." He leapt forward with a ball of clay on the end of a stick and rammed a bung into place, stopping the flow. Then he opened a flap high up on the side of the furnace and tipped in a second charge – a plastic sack containing 3lb of coke, 28lb of iron and 11lb of limestone, which acts as a flux.

"Six minutes to go," announced his assistant, Grant. He and another colleague, John, were wearing goggles, gloves, long aprons of chrome leather, and spats made of the same material, which made them look like Napoleonic soldiers. These, Andy explained, were to protect them from flying globes of molten iron. "Sometimes it starts raining all over the place: splashes can drop through the lace-holes of

your shoes and burn your feet away."

One minute to melt-down. John and Grant grabbed the long handles of the ladle, which itself was glowing red-hot on the inside. With 30 seconds to go, the roof of the shed went on fire. Its timbers began to crackle merrily – but the pace was too hot for anyone to bother with that peripheral conflagration.

As his helpers held the ladle in position beneath the exit hole, Andy poked away the clay bung. Out gushed a stream of molten iron, incandescent red, beautiful, terrify-

ing. In seconds the ladle was half full of liquid seething at 1,400 degrees centigrade. Lovely patterns writhed on its surface – "like eelers in the river", Andy said.

The doughty assistants poured steadily into one mould after another, and down in the black depths five little pigs instantly solidified. These early models will go out to the brewery's favoured customers as bar ornaments, but later specimens will probably be sold in limited editions.

If the foundry were geared up for full production, the meltdown process could be

repeated all day, with charge after charge of iron dumped down the furnace. Andy may start casting wheel-hubs for his own use, or engineering parts for paying customers: his intention, certainly, is to develop the venture into a money-making concern.

Uley still, thank goodness, has a thriving village shop and post office. It also has a primary school, an arts centre, a small restaurant and a brewery. But now, also, it has a fiery furnace – and that, surely, is a sign of vitality that any village would welcome.

SOMETIMES
IT'S EASIER
TO TALK
TO SOMEONE
YOU
DON'T LIKE.



NATURE NOTE

Ivy, being evergreen, is a symbol of everlasting life – the reason, no doubt, why the plant is inseparably entwined with Christmas. Yet, with its creeping habit and poisonous leaves, it seems a rather sinister and mysterious form of decoration. It can certainly be toxic if eaten in large quantities, and one hears of horses killed by it. Yet deer browse on it with relish, especially in cold weather. It is often fatal to trees – but not because (as some suppose) it drains away their life-blood. Like most plants, it gets nutrients through its roots, and when it grows up a trunk, with hundreds of suckers clinging to the bark, it is merely

using the tree as a convenient support. Danger comes from the fact that its dense mass of leaves greatly increases what foresters call the tree's sail area, raising wind resistance to such a degree that host and parasite are liable to be blown over together. Yet ivy has its uses: its foliage offers good habitat to small birds, harbouring thousands of insects for them to eat, and its berries make excellent food at this time of year, when other kinds of wild provender run short.

Duff Hart-Davis

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RE-OPENS SATURDAY 3rd JANUARY

When you have a problem, it's the most natural thing in the world to want to talk it through with someone. Sometimes, though, this creates another problem: who's the best person to confide in?

An obvious choice would be a close friend. But let's face it, we don't always choose our friends for their amazing powers of tact, diplomacy and discretion. Tell one person, and you may end up telling the world.

You may be lucky enough to be able to talk to someone in your family. Then again, you may be one of the large number of people who find talking to your nearest and dearest agonisingly embarrassing.

A girlfriend or boyfriend? If you can, great. But sometimes we don't want to expose our weaknesses to those who fancy us.

And sometimes your relationship is

the very problem you want to discuss. That's where The Samaritans can be useful. We're more discreet than your best mate, we'll listen as carefully as your girlfriend or boyfriend, and we're as sympathetic as your family. We're also non-judgemental, unshockable, and extremely experienced.

Our national number is 0345 90 90 90, and you can e-mail us on jo@samaritans.org or visit our homepage at www.samaritans.org. We're available 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

And you don't have to be climbing up the walls before you call us – any kind of problem, big or small, is a good enough reason to pick up the phone. Call now. You'll find we're remarkably easy to talk to.

The Samaritans
We'll get through it with you

Jokes: Two Estonians failed in their attempt to set a new record by telling jokes for 61 hours non-stop. Their copy of the *Guinness Book of Records* was an old one and its figure of 60 hours had been increased to 100 hours by a Peruvian in 1990.

11/WALKS

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 27 DECEMBER 1997
11

Rambling into 1998

In a mood of celebration, the Ramblers' Association has organised a huge variety of walks around Britain. Most walks are between four and seven miles and those that are longer are often arranged in a figure of eight so people can stay for either the whole or half the day. It is advisable to take food and drink, or ring the contact to find out if there will be a pub stop. It would also be wise to have warm, waterproof clothing and stout footwear. Walks marked with a D indicate that dogs on leads are welcome. Telephone numbers marked with an (e) indicate evening only and those marked with a (d) indicate daytime only.

ENGLAND

Bedfordshire: 27 Dec: Roston: 1.15pm, Bedford Park Gates, 5 miles - 01234 301027. Clifton: 2pm, church, 4 miles D - 01462 672906 (e). 28 Dec: Luton: 10am, Putteridge Recreation Centre, 6 miles D - 01582 661944 (e). Broghborough: 10am, picnic site, 10 miles D - 01908 584348. Broom: 10am & 1.45pm, The Green, 6 & 3 miles D - 01767 318487. 30 Dec: Cople: 10am, church, 6 miles D - 01234 359256. Streatley: 10am, Sharpnose Clappers NT cp, 7 miles - 01582 505808. 31 Dec: Clapham: 10am, The Green, 5-6 miles D - 01234 381508. 1 Jan: Souldrop: 10am, church, 6 miles D - 01234 822294. Shillington: 10.30am, Musgrave Arms, 6 miles D - 01234 353704.

Berkshire: 1 Jan: Chapel Row: 11am, off-road cp on left, 5 miles D - 0118 9882674.

Bristol: 28 Dec: Doynton: 10.30am, church, 6 miles D - 0117 9315033.

Buckinghamshire: 28 Dec: Lane End, nr High Wycombe: 10am & 1.30pm, village cp, both 5 miles D - 01494 881543 (am walk) 01628 483430 (pm walk). Burnham: 10.15am, Lord Mayors Drive parking area, end of Beeches Rd, Farnham Common, 5 miles - 01628 622991. Slough: 10.30am, Black Park Country Park cp (£1 fee), 5 miles D - 0118 9772179 (e). 30 Dec: Weston Turville: 11am, layby fronting Weston Turville Reservoir, World's End Lane, 5 miles D - 01296 427717. 1 Jan: Long Crenodon: 11am, The Square, adj. to B4011, Bicester Rd, 6 miles D - 01296 427717. Stokenchurch: 11am, Cowleaze Wood parking area, 8 miles D - 01494 528381.

Cambridgeshire: 28 Dec: Fenstanton: 1.30pm, Chequers Street cp, 4 miles D - 01480 461405. Thorney: 2pm, church, 2 miles D - 01733 222880. 29 Dec: West Perry: 10am, cp, for walk around Grafton Water Reservoir, 9 miles D - 01234 823045. 1 Jan: Longthorpe: 1.30pm, Fisherman's cp, 4 miles - 01733 264011. 4 Jan: Peterborough: 8am, Key Theatre cp, walking in Manifold Valley, ring near the day for further info - 01780 470375.

Cheshire: 27 Dec: Congleton: 10am, library cp (to share cars), 6 miles - 01782 512545. Disley: 1pm, cp next to Disley Station Approach, A6, 4-5 miles D - 01625 873689. 28 Dec: Congleton: 10am, library cp, 9 miles - 01606 832236 (e). Great Budworth: 10am and 1.30pm, Bowling Green cp, 5 miles D - 01928 575726. 29 Dec: Congleton: 9.30am, library cp (to share cars), 11 miles - 01270 763612 (e). Culcheth: 10.30am, Pack Horse Inn, Church Lane, 5 & 10 miles D - 01925 763512 or 762472. 30 Dec: Cotebrook: 10.30am, Oulton Mill cp, off A49 S.E. of Cotebrook, 10 miles D - 01928 575726. Congleton: 11am, library cp (to share cars), 7 miles - 01477 534238. 31 Dec: Trivir: 9.45am, layby opp. school, 6 miles D - 01244 810166. 1 Jan: Congleton: 9.30am, library cp (to share cars), 10 miles - 01543 423071 (e).

Cornwall: 27 Dec: Holywell Bay: 10am, NT cp, 9 miles - 01637 875199. The Lizard: 10.30am (for bus to Mullion), The Lizard Green, 8 miles D - 01326 240193. 28 Dec: Hayle: 11am, swimming pool, 5-6 miles - 01736 756510. St Columb Major: 11am, by church hall, 6 miles D - 01637 872008. Polzeath: 1.30pm, new Polzeath cp, Xmas cake walk, 4 miles D - 01208 73489. 29 Dec: Penryn: 1.45pm, Xmas cake walk, Mabe church (follow signs from village crossroads), 4-5 miles - 01326 372462. 31 Dec: Lelant: 10.30am, church, 4 or 8 miles - 01736 756510. 1 Jan: Trevvra: 11am, village layby, 10 miles D - 01326 340728. Gorran Churchtown: 12noon, roadside parking, 8 miles - 01637 878707.

Cumbria: 28 Dec: Lowick: 10.30am, layby nr Farmer's Arms, A5092, 7 miles D - 01229 772217.

Derbyshire: 27 Dec: Rowsley: 10am, old station cp, 6 miles D - 01629 583142 (w). Dale Abbey: 10.30am, Carpenters Arms cp, 5 miles D - 0115 9254066 (e). 28 Dec: Blore: 10am, Blore cp, 10 miles D - 0115 9254066 (e). Belper: 10am, Field Lane cp, 10 miles - 01332 662534. 29 Dec: Morely: 11am, layby on A508, SW of Rose & Crown, 6 miles D - 0115 9254066 (e). 30 Dec: Ticknall: 10am, village hall, 8 miles D - 01332 516264. 1 Jan: Oakerthorpe: 10am, Anchor Inn (A510 Ripley towards Ambergate), 6 or 9 miles D - 0115 9254066 (e).

Devon: 28 Dec: Totnes: 10.30am, National Trust Shop, 5-6 miles D - 01803 863043. Musbury: 10.30am, village hall, 6 miles D. Ashcombe: 10am, Mamhead obelisk cp, 6-7 miles D - 01392 413073. 30 Dec: Newton Poppleford: 10am, cp behind church, 8 miles D - 01392 413073. 31 Dec: Totnes: 10.30am, Pavilion cp, 5 miles D - 01803 862426. 1 Jan: Exeter: 11am, Matford Park

and Ride, 6 miles D - 01392 413073. Rose Ash: 11.30am, Five crossway, 5 3/4 miles D - 01271 342703.

Dorset: 27 Dec: Dorchester: 1.30pm, Maiden Castle cp, 4 miles - 01305 784672. 1 Jan: Compton Abbas: 10.30am or 1.30pm, Airfield, 8 & 4 miles D - 01258 820209. Bournemouth: 10.30am, Riverside Avenue, opp. Tesco entrance off Castle Lane East, 8 miles - 01202 470543.

Durham: 28 Dec: Elcheater: 10am, Bridge End, 6 miles D - 01207 560208. Durham City: 1.30pm, Moor House layby on A690, 1 mile NE of A1 junction, 5 miles D - 0191 3866886.

Essex: 27 Dec: High Easter: 10am, Cock and Bell pub, fig. of eight, 8 miles - 01245 609064. East Hammingfield: 10.30am, village hall cp, 3-4 miles - 01245 223657. 28 Dec: Great Waltham: 10am, A130 layby north of Warners Farm, 8 miles - 01245 609064. Clacton-on-Sea: 10.30am, Holland Haven Country Park cp, 8 miles D - 01255 551301. 30 Dec: Snarsbrook: 10am, station, outside book-

ing hall, 5 miles D - 0181 5303020. 31 Dec: Stebbing: 10.30am, High Street, 7 miles D - 01206 250585. Writtle: 10am, Hylands Park, 10 miles - 01245 609064. 1 Jan: Chigwell Row: 10.30am, cp opp. church, 8 miles - 0181 5273938 or 478 0747. Gosfield: 11am, on the road by the side of the lake, 7 miles D - 01376 331909. Navestock: 10.30am, opp. the Green Man pub, 4 miles - 01708 348046.

Gloucestershire: 27 Dec: Cheltenham: 10am, Chase Avenue, 5 miles - 01242 522276. 28 Dec: Churchdown: 10am, parish council offices, Parton Rd, 7 miles - 01452 855909. Coleford: 10am Speculation Picnic Site, Forest of Dean, 4 or 8 miles (4 + 4 figure of 8 route, returning to starting point for lunch - 01594 530928. Painswick: 10am, Starnages Lane cp, 5 miles - 01453 860004. 29 Dec: Chipping Campden: 10am, Chipping Campden comprehensive school cp, 5 miles - 01386 841 791. 1 Jan: Cirencester: 10am, Waterloo cp, 5 miles. Hampshire: 27 Dec: Lyndhurst: 1.30pm, Shatterford cp, Beaulieu Rd station, 5 miles - 01703 292010 (e). 29 Dec: Titchfield: 10am, cp behind fire station, 6 miles D - 01329 284556.

Hereford & Worcester: 27 Dec: Abbeville: 10am, park in road near Abbey, 10 miles - 01432 354098. Bromsgrove: 10am, layby on A448, west of M5 bridge, 5 & 8 miles - 01527 873441 (e). 28 Dec: Holt Fleet: 9.30am, Kings Norton Park, West Hill Rd, 7 miles - 0121 4435792. Kingston: 10.30am, Mill St cp, 6 miles - 01544 267380. Pershore: 10.30am, Old Bridge picnic site, on Evesham Rd out of Pershore, 4 miles D - 01386 554438. Redditch: 9.30am, Abbey Stadium Car Park, 8-mile figure of eight walk - 0121 4714159. Blakedown: 2pm, shoppers cp at jcn of A456 and B4188 (opp. Old House at Home pub), 3 miles D - 01562 700719 (e). 1 Jan: Dodford: 10.30am, Dodford Inn, 6 miles - 0121 4765420.

Hertfordshire: 8 Dec: Hitchin: 10.30am, St Mary's square, 10 miles - 01763 242677. 1 Jan: Royston: 9.30am, Heath Sports Centre cp, Baldock Rd, 6 miles D - 01763 242677. Wheathampstead: 10am, public cp behind The Bull pub, 7 miles - 01582 457359. Digsell: 10.30am, Wechyn North Station, 10 miles D - 0181 449 2139.

Isle of Wight: 27 Dec: Newport: 10am, Carisbrooke Castle cp, 3 & 5 miles D - 01983 862479.

Kent: 28 Dec: Addington: 9.30am, Addington Railway Station, 8-10 miles - 0171 339 8501. Hayes: 10am, station, 8-9 miles. Egerton: 10am or 1pm, fig. of 8, George Inn, 5 or 10 miles D - 01580 291596. 29 Dec: Tey Hill: 10am, NT cp, 8 miles D - 0181 468 7867. 30 Dec: Hadlow: 11am, village square, 6 miles D - 01732 851310 (e). 1 Jan: West Malling: 11am, cp off High St, 4 miles -

01634 364855.

Cudham: 1pm, recreation ground cp, 4-5 miles D - 0181 467 4698.

Lancashire: 27 Dec: Garstang: 10am, Community Centre cp, 6 miles D - 01995 604716. Preston: 1.30pm, Haslam Park cp, 5 miles D - 01772 736467. Roddlesworth: 9.30am, Info Centre, 10 miles D - 01772 431053. 28 Dec: Sadding: 9.45am, cp in village centre, 13 miles D - 01796 217577 (d) or 228681 (e). Colne: 10.30am, Ball Grove picnic area, 6-7 miles D - 01282 613721. 1 Jan: Belmont: 11am, cp at jcn of A675 and Crookfield Rd, 2 miles north of Belmont, 10 miles D - 01772 736467. Ormskirk: 1pm, St Anne's Church, Prescott Rd, 5 miles D - 01772 812034 (e).

Lincolnshire: 1 Jan: Lincoln: 10.30am, Stamp Fnd Locks on Witham River, east side of city, 7 miles D - 01522 522534.

London: 31 Dec: Chingford: 10.30am, station, 8 miles - 0181 527 3938 or 478 0747.

Manchester: 27 Dec: Broadbottom: 10am, Lynefield visitor centre, 9 miles - 0161 444 9918 (e). Whaley Bridge: 10.30am, station, 7 miles D - 01663 732706.

Merseyside: 27 Dec: Heswall: 10.30am, Banks Rd cp, Lower Heswall, 8 miles D - 0151 648 3070. 29 Dec: Thurston: 10.30am, Country Park Centre, 6 miles D - 0151 608 9472. Irby (Wirral): 10am, Anchor Hotel, 11 miles D - 01928 575726.

Norfolk: 28 Dec: Hunstanton: 10.30am, Holme Beach cp, 7 miles D - 01553 671829. 1 Jan: King's Lynn: 10am, layby opp. golf club, 4 miles D - 01553 675722.

Northamptonshire: 27 Dec: Earls Barton: 9.30am, picnic site, Grendon Rd, 5 miles D - 01933 678894. 28 Dec: Oundle: 9.30am 12 miles, 9.45am 10 miles, 10am 5 miles. 1.30pm, series of walks all starting from Barnwell Country Park, 5 miles D - 01933 460373. 28 Dec: Southwick: nr Oundle: 10am & 1.30pm, Shuckburgh Arms, 4 miles - 01780 470375 or 01733 892216. 1 Jan: Bugbrooke: 9.30am or 1.30pm, Bakers Arms, Gayton Road, 6 miles D - 01604 755786 (e). 3 Jan: Cranford St John: 2pm, village green nr old post office, 4 miles D - 01536 511162.

Northumberland: 28 Dec: Morpeth: 9.30am, castle square, 10 miles - 01670 518031. 29 Dec: Eldon: 10.30am, village green, 8 miles - 0191 487693.

Nottinghamshire: 28 Dec: Rufford: 10am, Rufford Abbey cp, 5 miles D - 01636 636357. Brinsley: 10.30am, cp on A608 south of Brinsley, 8 miles D - 0115 9821022 (e). 31 Dec: West Hallam: 10.30am, Station Rd layby (A609 west of Ilkeston), 7 miles D - 0115 9254066 (e). 1 Jan: Lound-

ham - 10.30am, north end of Main St, 8 miles D - 0115 9623560.

Oxfordshire: 27 Dec: Bletchington: 10.30am, the shop, 7 miles - 01869 244436. Chilton: 10.30am, cp to west of church, 9 miles - 01235 530174. 28 Dec: Woodstock: 10am, Church Eastone, 6 miles D - 01608 642360. 29 Dec: Quainton: 10am, church, 8 miles - 01869 244624. North End (S.E. of Watlington): 10am, village green, 5-6 miles - 01491 836654. 30 Dec: Freeland: 10am, opp. Oxfordshire Yeoman pub, 9 miles - 01993 898289. Ashbury: 10am, Rose & Crown pub cp, 6 miles D - 01367 241384. Ashbury: 2pm, Rose & Crown pub cp, 5 miles D - 01367 241384. 31 Dec: Childrey: 10am, church, 8 miles D - 01235 751280. 1 Jan: Ipsden, nr Wallingford: 10am, Homer Farm (park in house drive), Ipsden, nr Wallingford, 5 miles D - 01491 574065. Midleton Cheney: 10am, public library, 9 miles D. Longworth: 1.45pm, village centre, 4 miles D - 01367 710650.

Shropshire: 27 Dec: Church Stretton: 10.30am, cp on Easthope Rd, 8 miles - 01743 244922 (e). 28 Dec: Knowbury: 10.30am, village hall, 6 miles D - 01584 873757. 1 Jan: Ellicsmere: 10am, Moors cp on A495/528 at southern end of Mere, 6 miles - 01691 623026. 1 Jan: Worfield: 10.30am, The Wheel pub, 5 miles D - 01902 843176.

Somerset (inc Bath & N.E. Somerset): 27 Dec: West Lyford: 10.30am, Parish church, 5 miles D - 01458 447421. 28 Dec: Luxborough: 10.15am, village hall cp, 9 miles D - 01823 324185. Wells: 10.30am, Moat Bishops Palace, 7-8 miles D - 01749 670019. 30 Dec: Bishop's Lydeard: 2pm, Lydeard Hill cp, 4 miles D - 01823 442509. 31 Dec: Wells: 1.30pm, Moat Bishops Palace, 5 miles D - 01749 670019. Norton Fitzwarren: 2pm, Hillfort cp (Blackdown View), 4 miles D - 01823 324185. 1 Jan: Clevedon: 10am, Salthouse Fields cp, 5 miles D - 01275 871236. Midsomer Norton: 10.30am, Safeway cp, 5 miles D - 01761 436398. Bath: 2pm, outside RSPCA centre, The Avenue off Convocation Avenue, Claverton Down, 4 miles D - 01225 826279 (d) or 01225 337240 (e).

Staffordshire: 27 Dec: Newborough: 10am,

parish church, 4 miles D - 01283 565201. Cannock: 10.30am, Marquis Drive Visitors Centre, 4 miles D - 01543 274805. 28 Dec: Wolverhampton: 8.30am, West Park outer rim (opp. Summerfield Rd), to share cars, 13 miles in: 2000 foot climb - 01902 758947. Sutton Coldfield: 9am, South Parade cp, 9 miles - 0121 3131563.

Stourbridge: 10am, Stourbridge Junction railway station, 5 miles D - 01384 395692 (e). Lichfield: 10.30am, Friary long stay coach and lorry park, 6 miles - 01543 671962. Hanchurch: 10.45am, Hanchurch Hills picnic site, 7 miles - 01782 512851. 1 Jan: Lichfield: 10.30am, Friary long stay coach and lorry park, 6 miles - 01543 258439. 3 Jan: Wolverhampton: 9.30am, Broad St Basin cp (on ring road), 12 miles - 01902 847041 (e). 4 Jan: Tamworth: 10.30am, Spinning School Lane cp, 7 miles - 01827 383577.

Suffolk: 28 Dec:

Warwickshire: 28 Dec: Alcester: 10.15am, Bull's Head Yard cp, 8 miles - 0121 779 4456. 30 Dec: Farnborough: 10am, Butcher's Arms, 6 miles - 01926 640815. 31 Dec: Banbury: 10am, Edgehill, Castle Inn, 6 miles D - 01608 642360. 1 Jan: Stratford-on-Avon: 10am, Gower Memorial, 8 miles - 01789 298061.

Wiltshire: 28 Dec: Horningsham: 10am, telephone kiosk nr Bath Arms, 8 miles - 01225 753897. 29 Dec: Salisbury: 10am, NT cp south of Dinton church, 6 miles D - 01722 330214. 1 Jan: Salisbury: 9.30am, Sah Lane cp, 11 miles - 01722 324949. Box: 10am, Selwyn Hall cp, 9 miles - 01225 761200.

Worcestershire: 29 Dec: Powick: 10.30am, Old Road, off A44, Bastonford, 5 miles - 01886 832064. 31 Dec: Castlemorton: 9.30am, Plume of Feathers, Castlemorton, 5 miles - 01684 560989.

Yorkshire (East Riding, Kingston Upon Hull & York): 1 Jan: Hedon: 10am, market place, 8 miles D - 01904 708479 (e).

Yorkshire (North): 28 Dec: Burnistoun: 10am, old railway track, coastal road, 12 miles - 01723 863975. Chop Gate: 10am, Clay Bank cp, 11 miles D - 01633 692478 (e). Cawood: 10am, cp next to bridge, 7 miles D - 01937 833574. Leyburn: 10am, Nun's Close cp, or 10.30am, Leyburn Market Place, 6 miles D - 01748 824218. 31 Dec: Ripon: 10.30am, Fountains Abbey visitor centre, 11 miles D - 01904 791187 (e). 1 Jan: Summerbridge, nr Harrogate: 10.15am, Brimham Rocks main cp, 8 miles D - 01943 873197 (e).

Yorkshire (South): 27 Dec: Sheffield: 9am, station tram stop, 8 miles D - 0114 238 9173. 28 Dec: Sheffield: 9.15am, Pond St Bus No 274 to Fairholmes, 8 miles D - 0114 2389173. 29 Dec: Sheffield: 9.27am, bus to Fox House, White Edle, 8 miles D - 0114 2389173. 30 Dec: Sheffield: 9am, Commercial Street for tram to Malin Bridge, 8 miles D - 0114 2389173.

Yorkshire (West): 28 Dec: Gargrave: 10am, cp, 11 miles - 0113 2403889. Harrogate: 10am, Gateway, Valley Gardens, 9 miles - 01423 872268. Ilkley: 11am, station, 5-6 miles D - 01943 609321. 29 Dec: Horsforth: 2pm, station, 5-6 miles D - 0113 2286274. 30 Dec: Menston: 11am, station, 5-6 miles D - 01943 873123. 31 Dec: Guisley: 10.30am, station, 6-8 miles D - 01943 863786.

Wales

Cardiff: 28 Dec: Trap: 10.30am, Cennen Arms cp, 4 miles D - 01558 822960. 1 Jan: Llandudno: 10.30am, Red Lion cp, 4 miles D - 01550 777623. Llanfair: 11am, cp off Kings Arms, 5 miles D - 01554 759280.

Conwy: 27 Dec: Abergel: 1.30pm, opp. police station on A547, 4 miles - 01745 824611.

Gwent/Torfaen: 30 Dec: Pontypool: 10am, leisure centre cp, 8 miles D - 01495 772109.

Gwynedd: 28 Dec: Llandanwg: 10.30am, cp on turning off A496, over 1ml south of Harlech, 5 miles - 01341 440238. Llanberis: 11am, Oriel cp, 6 miles D. Chwilog: 11am, Lon Goed, 5-6 miles D - 01766 522238. Llanberis: 11am, cp, 6 miles - 01286 870441.

Merthyr Tydfil: 1 Jan: Ponsticill: 11am, The Red Cow pub, 5 miles D - 01443 836257.

Monmouthshire: 1 Jan: Chepstow: 10am, Castle cp, 6 miles - 01594 530928.

Powys: 27 Dec: Llangatock: 10am, cp opp. church, 9 miles D - 01495 773495 (e). Llangamarch Wells: 10am, Aberceiros Inn, 6 miles - 01591 620295. 28 Dec: Knighton: 10.15am, Crossways (on A488 on to B4356), 13 miles in: 2,000ft climb - 01902 758947. 30 Dec: Llanbrynmar: 10am, cp opp. Wynnistay Arms Hotel, 8 miles - 01650 521544.

Rhondda Cynon Taff: 28 Dec: Llantrisant: 10am, leisure centre cp (to share cars), 6 miles - 01443 740507. 30 Dec: Aberdare: 10am, Dare Valley Country Park centre cp, 7 miles - 01443 223470. 1 Jan: Llantrisant: 11am, leisure centre cp (to share cars), 8 miles - 01222 890621.

Swansea: 1 Jan: Gower: 10am, A4118 Rose Cottage, west of Penmaen, visiting Cefn Bryn, Mill Wood, Penrice Hse & Castle, Nicholson Wood & Burrows, 7 miles D (no extending leads) - 01792 367188.

Wrexham: 28 Dec: Erding: 10am, Yale Hotel cp, 4-5 miles D - 01978 755406. 29 Dec: Glyn Ceiriog: 10.30am, Pont-y-Methion, river bridge, 2mls SW of Glyn Ceiriog, 5 miles - 01691 718771.

Scotland

Aberdeen: 4 Jan: Castlegate: 11am, Mercat Cross, 5 miles.

Ayrshire (south): 28 Dec: Troon: 9am, Fullerton Woods cp, 7 miles - 01563 527996 (d). Straiton: 9am, cp, 8 miles - 01294 821258. Irvine: 9am, Volunteer Rooms, 8 miles - 01294 821258.

Dumfriesshire: 27 Dec: Dumfries: 10am, Overton House, 7 miles - 0141 4290893 (e).

East Lothian: 28 Dec: Dalkeith: 9.30am, indoor bowling club cp, 8 miles - 0131 6639335 (e). Whitehall: 10am, Crossgate Hall cp, 7 miles - 01506 635901.

Edinburgh: 2 Jan: Riccarton: 10.45am, Riccarton Arms cp, short walk - 0131 3374544 (e).

Fife: 27 Dec: Kingsbarns: 1.30pm, village square, 4 miles D - 01334 657573. 28 Dec: Wormit: 10am, end of public road at Wormit Bay, 6 miles D - 01382 623052 (e). Leslie: 10.30am, Holl Reservoir cp off A911 bet. Leslie and Auchmuirbridge, 8 miles - 01592 873297. Charleston: 10.30am, Harbour cp, Limekilns, 3 miles - 01383 723560. Kettlebridge: 11am, Main Street (garage end), 5 miles - 01592 750332.

Stirlingshire: 30 Dec: Stirling: 11am, Linden Avenue cp, 5 miles - 01786 472323.

West Lothian: 31 Dec: Liffelithgow: 9am, Liffelithgow Cross (bus stance) for bus trip to Uphall, 12 miles - 01506 845234 (e).

Wales

Cardiff: 28 Dec: Trap: 10.30am, Cennen Arms cp, 4 miles D - 01558 822960. 1 Jan: Llandudno: 10.30am, Red Lion cp,

12/SPORT

Sweatbands, chronographs and Bradford City hold-alls – the Christmas gifts from hell



MIKE ROWBOTTOM

ON THE PRESENTS THAT FAIL TO FIT THE BILL

What is it about those revolving doors in Tesco?

You approach them with your goods-heavy trolley and you – just – miss the opportunity to get into one of the turning compartments. All attempts to alter this phenomenon are futile. You might as well ring up the Speaking Clock and expect it to tell you the time without mentioning the sponsor first.

"The time – sponsored by Accurist." Why must they always interrupt? And how dare anyone say they are sponsoring Time? What next? Space?

But anyway, there you are, awaiting your moment, and it arrives, and with a shove of your hip you manoeuvre yourself into the merry-go-round and... stop... Some kid, run-

ning into the store ahead of Mummy, is pushing on the door and activating the safety device.

So, with pigeon steps, you complete your semi-revolution and arrive at the fair field of cars, thinking to yourself things like this: "£123.27p. How did I spend that? Christmas, though – always expensive. But £123.27p..."

And things like this: "Where is the car?"

And things like this: "Pasta sauce... pasta sauce... didn't get it. And bread!"

Thinking all these things this week as I stood outside the booming superstore where I spend half my life and more than half my money, I heard a little voice calling to me: "Slow down! Pull over!"

As if to underline the urgency of the message, there was an accompanying sound of a siren.

My advice, as I swiftly observed, was coming from a 20p-per-ride children's police car plugged into the store's outside wall.

And I thought to myself: "This little electronic fellow has a point. We could all benefit from a few moments of quiet contemplation at this busy time."

So I took a couple of minutes out to reflect on the deeper meaning of the annual mass madness that is Christmas. Nope. No good.

This time of year always reminds me of the New Yorker cartoon where a young couple are showing their friends a

wall-full of empty new bookshelves and the woman is explaining: "Harry and I are thinking of getting into reading."

Christmas resolutions arrive before those of New Year; but they go by the board just as easily. The only difference is that Christmas resolutions are imposed on you – by gifts.

Somewhere in our house – perhaps in the children's dressing-up basket – are a set of sweatbands for the wrist and forehead, designed to keep active sports enthusiasts in the game when the going gets hot.

Two sets to one up and serving for the match? Sweep away that head of perspiration trickling down your nose before hammering the ball away for an ace.

Got a grudge match down at the squash club? Don't let sweat put you off at that crucial moment.

But the thing is, I have never used any of them. Not even once.

The way I look at it is this – you put them on, you need to sweat. I don't like the feel of that obligation.

Another Christmas brought me the hopeful gift of a stopwatch. I was put on guard immediately by the official description of the item – "Water-resistant LCD Chronograph."

Why would I need something water-resistant? Was I expected to stand in rain at some stage? Or venture underwater? The accompanying information confirmed my darkening

fears. "With Nine Lap-Time Memories."

Er...not me. And I wasn't anticipating a career as a rain-swept coach either.

But the mute challenge of a more recent gift made that chronograph seem no more than a gentle hint.

This was a back-pack water container with a pipe which jutted towards the wearer's face, enabling refreshment to be accessed without the need for halting or breaking stride.

I don't call that a gift. I call that a demand.

It wanted, it required an exercise freak, a person who regularly ran long distances and was so serious about it all that they couldn't spare even a minute to stop for refreshments.

What next? A mobile ladder?

But at least one is able to set such items aside with a shudder, compose oneself, and press on with the slacker lifestyle.

If only such an option had been open to me as a 12-year-old West Ham United fanatic, when Christmas Day brought the gift of a much-needed sports hold-all from a distant aunt.

It was a football bag. That was good. It was a Bradford City football bag. That was not good.

I had to use it for the entire first year. Which was more than enough time for me to assimilate the important life-lesson: beware of relatives bearing sporting gifts.

Surfing's bad boy comes of age in Pipe's mean swells

The heaviest wave ridden by the heaviest guy. The result of the Pipeline Masters, the final event on the ASP (Association of Surfing Professionals) world tour, confirmed what is received wisdom on the Hawaiian North Shore: that Johnny Boy Gomes is the undisputed head honcho. Kelly Slater from Florida may have won the world championship for the fifth time, but Gomes, 31, showed that experience and local knowledge are paramount at Pipeline.

Over three days, all non-Hawaiians, including the entire ASP top 44, were progressively eliminated. There were a lot of good waves, but there were even more bad waves – mean close-outs set to slam the insufficiently selective surfer into the reef. The final, on 6ft to 8ft waves, was fought out between two unseeded trialists, Gomes and another veteran, Michael Ho, aged 40, who last won the Masters back in 1982.

The writing was on the wall for Ho from the moment the two took off on successive waves of a big set and Ho opted to go right into Backdoor – Pipeline's right-handed mirror image – and Gomes went left. While Gomes took the drop, stalled and pulled up into the tube and finally flew out with the spit, all grace under pressure.

Ho vanished into the labyrinth but could not find his way out again.

"This is one of the best waves in the world," said Gomes after his victory, "and now I've proved – not just to myself but to the world – that I'm one of the best tube riders." He had something to prove: Johnny Boy, the popular local hero, is something of an anti-hero in the world at large. He refuses to have any truck with the pro tour, heaping scorn on the lesser waves surfed elsewhere by the ASP guys, and earning sponsorship on account of being a Pipeline specialist and big-wave bruiser.

I remember running into a



ANDY MARTIN

NEWS FROM THE NORTH SHORE

cialist and big-wave bruiser.

"He is not the stereotypical 6ft blue-eyed, blond-haired surfer," said Michael Willis, who was one of his early shapers and sponsors. "He had to struggle against a lot of prejudice." Born on the west side of the island, in Makaha, with its strong ethnic surfing tradition, stocky, swarthy, a Hawaiian Mike Tyson, Johnny Boy built his reputation in equal parts on fearless and aggressive wave riding and casual random violence in and out of the water.

Gomes developed a possessive relationship with Pipeline. He didn't take too well to anyone else stealing "his" wave.

"Dropping in" – the cardinal surfing sin of hitching a ride on a wave already occupied – will be punished severely. And anything else perceived as remotely similar. If he didn't paddle over and grab your board and inflict a nasty wipe-out on the spot, he would wait until you hit the beach and then jump on you there. Soon it became a toss-up as to which was worse: being nailed to the reef or running into Johnny Boy on a bad day. He was famously moody, a Jekyll and Hyde by turns charming and monstrous.

I remember running into a



Hawaiian beachgoers have a close-up view of the stupendous surf at Waimea Bay on Oahu's North Shore

Photograph: Carl Vitti/AP

young Australian female pro a few years back who had been out at Pipe and was looking the worse for it with cuts and bruises around her face. I sympathised with the war wounds I imagined she had received on the notoriously vicious reef. "These aren't reef injuries," she replied. "These are all down to Johnny Boy." He was even-handed and would never discriminate on account of age or gender.

Stories of Johnny Boy getting his come-uppance by picking on an incompetent surfer who also happens to be an Is-

raeli paratrooper and who then proceeds to take him apart are legion and doubtless apocryphal. But I can confirm that I, too, have once accidentally dropped in on Johnny Boy.

In those days I had no idea even who Johnny Boy was. When I pulled into a driveway in Pukea Road I was expecting to find a couple of girls called Kristin and Sabine. Instead of that, this unshaven hombre comes out of the house and growls at me, not once but several times over: "Move your fucking car out of my drive."

In all my youthful naiveté,

I toy with asking him if he has some kind of problem, but decide to let it pass. Seasoned commentators derided this momentary impulse of mine. "He would have dismembered you!" they laughed. Fate had introduced me to Johnny Boy Gomes.

JBG as he is popularly known (initials bearing a similar proximity to GBH) is the main sponsored surfer of Du Hui. Da Hui is more than just a hip beachwear company. The "Hui O He'enslu" is the name of the Hawaiian wave riding club with an ethnic undercurrent also known as the "Black Shorts", with unintended echoes of PG Wodehouse's comic pseudo-fascist organisation. But "Hui" roughly translates as "gang" and, in the past, they have aroused contradictory emotions on the North Shore. One Hawaiian journalist condemned the "Water Patrol" services they provide at ASP contests as "a classic racket: who are they providing protection from? Only themselves, that's who." Another local retorted: "They may be the mafia, but at least they're our mafia."

There is a symbolic link with the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, as the Hui assert the entitlement of indigenous surfers to their breaks. With Captain Cook and American haoles (white guys) and annexation on the one hand, the Hui, on the other, have come to represent the Hawaiian heritage and the great tradition of the waterman, once identified with Duke Kahanamoku, the Leonardo Da Vinci of the Renaissance of surfing in the 20th century. Da Hui is a commercial offshoot and in an

ironic twist that betokens a new-found respectability, its president is now applying for membership of the ASP steering committee.

Meanwhile, if Johnny Boy and Da Hui are reformed characters, the Hawaiian waters remain unforgiving. Two surfers have died in the last couple of days, on relatively small waves, one off the Wall, another at Rocky Point. But the talk is of the big swell that is forecast to hit at Christmas and fill all the North Shore stockings – but above all Waimea Bay – with sublime waves.

Among the good, the bad and the ugly Naseem Hamed takes the golden, full fruit biscuit



CHRIS MAUME

SPORT ON TV

As 1997's referee looks at his watch and some people invade the pitch because they think it's all over, there's just time to hand out a few small-screen brickbats and bouquets (as is the way with this column they are mostly brickbats).

Worst new series: In January, Channel 4 foisted *The Moon* on us, presented by magazine editor Danny Kelly, and Tim Clark, an alleged comedian who really should stick to soft drinks ads. I have to admit I've never watched it all through the night, but then I doubt anyone else has. The programme hasn't wanted for potentially interesting guests, but every discussion has had that desultory "what shall we talk about now?" feeling.

The nadir came when Greg Chappell was given all the

time he wanted, and then more, to plug his total hair replacement system. It was scant consolation that by that time I was probably the only mug still watching as the programme sold, at a knock down price, whatever soul it possessed.

Still, there was worse (I'd like to insert a few choice words about Channel 5 at this point, but I'm still not returned – Richard Ingrams, who used to review TV for *The Spectator* despite not actually possessing a set, is my inspiration here).

Sky One's *Eat My Sport* fronted by Lofty of East-Enders and Statto from Fantasy Football League is a perfect demonstration of how the medium takes subjects of apparently endless fascination, sucks all the life out of

them, then dresses them up as cheap screen sellers. With Skinner and Baddiel, the humour was intended to reside in Statto's very unsuitability – a sort of Motson on Mogdon – but why make a bad joke worse by giving him his own series?

Best new series: Not quite curliish enough to put *On Side* (BBC1) on the worst new series short list, I'm not quite charitable enough to consider it for best new series. It needs more substance, less sycophantic froth. More sport, less showbiz. John Inverdale may be flavour of the year, but not this palate.

The best new series was also the most pleasant surprise. Sky One's football soap *Dream Team* had a cast of engaging characters all well

played, and plot lines and situations that were rooted in reality and, although he didn't hang around for more than the first few weeks, Ron Atkinson was a revelation as Harchester United's manager. At 58, he's probably a bit old to be considering second careers, but I could easily see him doing the job, as he would say, in something like *Prime Suspect* or *Our Friends in the North*.

Best documentary: There were several contenders. ITV's "There's Only One Barry Fry", for example, followed the eponymous hero, who I always imagined selling second-hand cars in Albert Square, as he took over Peterborough and came to realise that running a club on the breadline is living in the

trenches dressed in head-to-toe dayglo orange and dancing the jig. He makes for such great TV, though, the film should have been ever better than it was.

Best of all was "Footballers Wives" (Channel 4). On one hand there was Suzy Walker, the wife of Spurs goalkeeper Ian, with her naff cable show, "Hiya!" the most unforgiving sequence featuring her failing to remember her name for a trailer.

Walker came across as venal, vapid and vacuous. At the other end of the spectrum, where real life exists, was Ann Lee, wife of Jason. As the Nottingham Forest striker pondered a move to Watford, Ann looked after their kids and semi-detached home and disconcerted eloquently on her virtual widowhood. "I

hate football," she says at one point, in superb contrast to the twitterings of the other two wives. "I think netball should be on telly, not football." She gets the golden thumbs up from me.

And so to the final category in my personal awards ceremony, and my favourite:

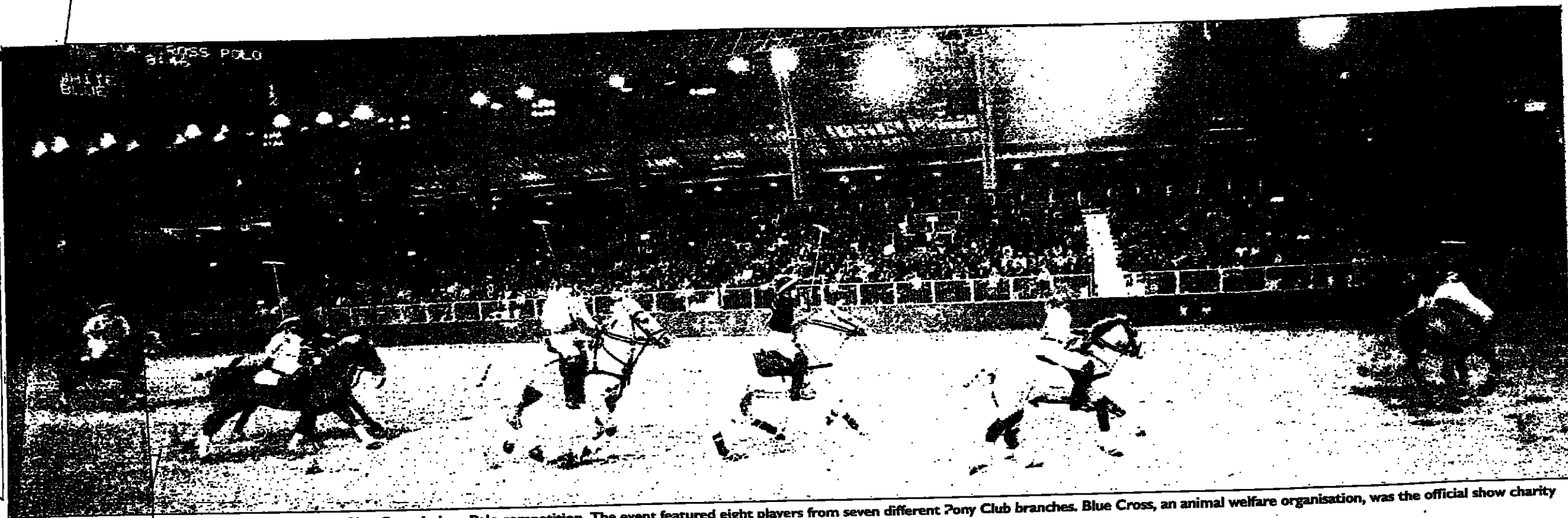
Dick head of the year: (I picture a trophy stitched together by Damien Hirst from the appropriate bodyparts then cast in fool's gold). There used to be only one contender for this but he has finally been usurped. Chris Eubank has fought manfully this year to keep his title, especially with his recent appearances on *They Think It's All Over* and *A Question of Sport*. But he has been eclipsed by the boundless tal-

ent of Naseem Hamed to make an arse of himself.

On Christmas night "Starting Blocks" (ITV) had footage of the young Hamed, wearing what appeared to be an old cushion cover, landing flat on his behind as he tried to vault the ropes. This should be shown everytime he fights, as an antidote to his 20-minute laser disco entrances. He's a fine boxer (though not that fine, as Kevin Kelley underlined recently). But as his performance on "Sports Review of the Year" (BBC1) demonstrated so hilariously, he is without equal in the tosspot department.

They should get Ann Lee to manage him. She'd sort him out. In fact, strike that. She's too good for him. Should she ever get sick of Jason, though, she knows where to find me.

13/PHOTO-SHOOT



Charge of the black, bay and white brigade in the Blue Cross Indoor Polo competition. The event featured eight players from seven different Pony Club branches. Blue Cross, an animal welfare organisation, was the official show charity

Jumping with joy at equine extravaganza

Simon Brooks-Ward, director of the Olympia Show Jumping Championships which ended their five-day run on Monday, can forget about the publicity stunts dreamt up by his late father, Raymond. These included sending Ted Edgar, in full safari kit, down Kensington High Street on an elephant in order to publicise one of the early shows.

The crowds now flock to this event, relishing the snappy programme of top-class jumping, spirited displays and fun competitions. This year's 26th running

of the championships broke all previous records, attracting a near capacity audience over the 10 performances.

Some of the entertainments – notably the Pedigree Chum Dog Agility and the Osborne Refrigerators Shetland Pony

Grand National are perennial favourites, with amazingly agile dogs breathlessly eager to please their handlers and Shetlands going faster than you thought their short legs could carry them.

Other displays included the Metropolitan Mounted Police

jumping through hoops of fire and the latest French showman, Jean-François Pignon, playing with his friends who happen to be horses.

With a prize fund worth £230,000, the show jumping attracted most of the world's top

riders and generated thunderous applause whenever one of the Whitaker brothers appeared. There was warm appreciation, too, for the best of the visitors, notably the stylish German, Ludger Beerbaum, who was leading rider of the show.

Beerbaum's two children, aged 13 and 6, were at Olympia for the first time. Like other youngsters they loved the show, even before they had the thrill of cheering their father home to victory.

— Genevieve Murphy

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID ASHDOWN



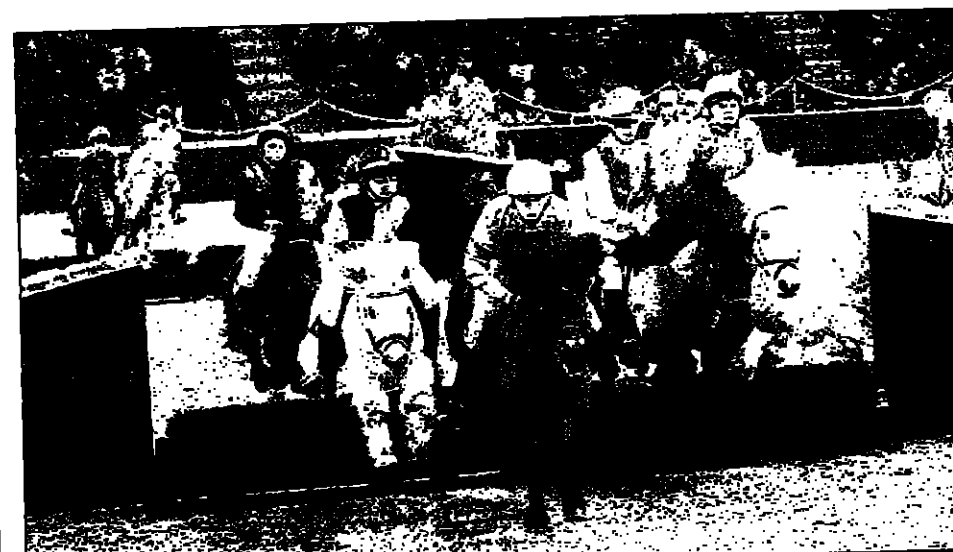
Equine equilibrium act for Jean-François Pignon's stand-up attraction



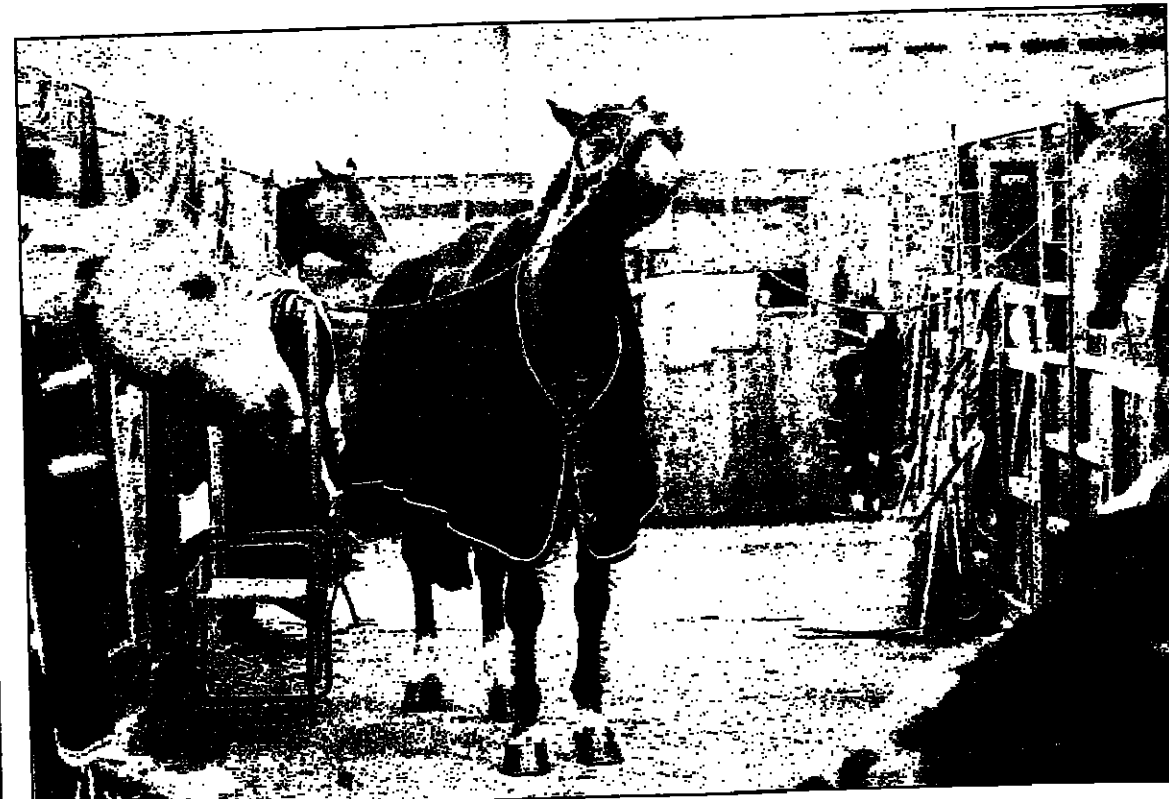
On the edge of their seats: The Olympia crowd enjoy a close-up view of competition in the Pet Plan Christmas Candle Stakes



Dogged determination in the Pedigree Chum Agility Pairs Relay



Small courses for small horses: The Shetland Pony Grand National



VICE GOVERNOR

The chase had been intense in a battle between the great One Man and Son Bay, and although they started as foes, they finished with another friend. Senor E. Betrucci, a popular outsider, they were inspired by a

REPORTS

1. *What is the main purpose of the document?*
 2. *What are the key findings of the study?*
 3. *What are the implications of the findings?*
 4. *What are the limitations of the study?*
 5. *What are the conclusions of the study?*

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1. The first step in the process is to identify the problem or issue that needs to be addressed. This involves gathering information and understanding the context of the problem.

1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves understanding the context and the specific requirements of the task.

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100

Photograph: Empics

Work on his chipping and putting, and fitness, will be the priority when he returns to business after the Christmas break. First, there was a burning question. "When do we finally get to see Lee?" asked Westwood's mother, Trish. "After our Christmas party tomorrow," said Chandler, "then he's all yours."

LEAGUE: Chester Jets v
1.30; Manchester Gears v
Loughborough 5.30; Newcas-
tle Royals 5.30; Sheffield
Palace 6.0.

Ayr Scottish Eagles v
6.30; Sheffield Steelers
6.30; Basingstoke Bees
7.0.

The age in years of Louise Carroll, who has been named in Great Britain's Olympic hockey development squad. Carroll, who plays for Bonagrass Grove in Dundee, celebrated her 15th birthday on Monday.

TEN PERFORMANCES THAT SHO

Terrace troubles
mar England's
glorious night

FOOTBALL BY GLENN MOORE

All roads had led to Rome for 11 February, when Gianfranco Zola's goal condemned England to their first World Cup defeat at Wembley. The question for England was whether the ancient Italian capital would open up the direct route to France 98, or lead to elimination in the detour of the play-offs?

Publicly – and, given his inner confidence, probably privately as well – Glenn Hoddle had never doubted England could get the result they needed. Impressive victories in Poland and over Italy in Nantes persuaded others to believe as well and England's task seemed altogether less daunting when Italy's failure to win in Georgia left the coach only a draw away from automatic qualification.

Yet even a point remained a formidable task. Italy had won all 15 previous World Cup ties in Rome and England would be without Alan Shearer.

Until they appeared on the pitch it seemed David Beckham and Gareth Southgate would also be absent too but their "injuries" proved more a Hoddle smokescreen than reality. To be so Machiavellian seemed apt in Italy and England went on to appropriate their hosts' traditional role as well. They defended deep, kept the ball, looked to attack on the counter and were not averse to a bit of gamesmanship.

It needed Tony Adams' experience to hold England together in the early stages but Paolo Maldini then succumbed to an early injury and Paul Gascoigne and Paul Ince took control in midfield. As they toyed with the ball, Italy, already



Roman resistance: Italian defenders attempt to block David Beckham's free-kick during October's World Cup qualifier in Rome Photograph: Empics

struggling with Gianfranco Zola out of form and out of position, lost their discipline.

The Dutch referee, Mario van der Ende, was said to be a lover of pasta (an allegation his figure substantiated) but he was as impartial as Solomon. First he booked Alessandro del Piero for diving over an Adams challenge, then, after Angelo di Livio besmirched his Christian name with a devilish tackle on Sol Campbell, he waved the red.

England seemed bound for France and should have been celebrating a famous victory when Ian Wright rounded the goalkeeper, only to hit a post. England momentarily let their concentration slip and, seconds later, a dangerous cross was drifting towards Christian Vieri. The £12m centre-forward rose to meet it... and headed wide. On the bench Hoddle breathed again before exploding in a jig of joy with his staff as, barely a

minute later, the final whistle sounded.

Sadly not all those able to tell their grandchildren, in years to come, "I was there" wished they were at the time. Once again England fans reaped the harvest of their reputation. An Italian police force already vengeful and fearful had been further stirred up by two days of often intimidating and lewd public drunkenness. Their attitude was compounded by poor crowd

management and the presence of several thousand English supporters, some with malevolent intent, who had bought tickets through unofficial channels.

The chaos fans experienced below the seating inside the stadium, largely caused by Italian police, was matched by the hostility they encountered in them. A first half pock-marked by hand-to-hand fighting between fans and police, and decorated by a steady stream of

missiles thrown between the two sets of fans, was shown around the world.

If, by the end, England's bid to win the World Cup of 1998 seemed on course, their attempt to stage the 2006 tournament did not. That the Italian FA should later be handed the bulk of the blame was little consolation. It was an unforgettable night for English football but one which English football might prefer others to forget.

Hingis has confidence of youth to negate Novotna's challenge

The scene was set for a fascinating confrontation of youth and experience, laced with brilliant net play and breathtaking passing shots. Martina Hingis, only 16 and barely tested during the course of the Wimbledon championships, would have to be at her precocious best if she was to deny Jana Novotna the greatest prize in tennis.

Up in the players' guest box, two faces were studied more closely than the rest. Melanie Molitor and Hana Mandlikova, both from the Czech Republic, did their best to appear relaxed while suppressing nerves.

Molitor, Hingis's mother and coach, had named her daughter Martina after the great Navratilova, scarcely daring to dream that the day would arrive when her Slovakian-born child would triumph on the stage Navratilova had made her own.

Mandlikova was all too familiar with the Centre Court. She had lost there in two singles finals, against Chris Evert in 1981 and Navratilova in 1986.

TENNIS BY JOHN ROBERTS

Mandlikova had also, as Novotna's coach, suffered agonies in the guest box in 1993 when her compatriot lost to Steffi Graf in the final after serving with a 4-1 lead in the deciding set.

Novotna, 28, was the sympathetic favourite of many of the spectators, her tearful episode against Graf now part of Wimbledon lore and her attacking style worthy of gold leaf acknowledgement on the roll of honour. Graf's absence after injuring a knee during the French Open contributed to the popular support for Novotna, a member of the established order attempting to fend off the head girl of a rising generation.

For all that, and the conviction that Hingis's time would come soon enough, the historical context of the Swiss prodigy's progress was irresistible. A year earlier, aged 15 years and

282 days, Hingis had become the youngest winner of a principal event at Wimbledon, partnering the Czech Helena Sukova to the women's doubles title.

Lottie Dod, the youngest singles champion, was aged 15 years and 285 days when she won the title in 1887. The Cheshire cotton-broker's daughter was only required to win three matches, including the challenge round.

Hingis, the holder of the Australian Open title and the youngest world No 1, did not encounter a seeded opponent in the top half of the draw. One of the potential dangers, Iva Majoli, the No 4 seed, at that point the only player to have beaten Hingis since the start of the year (in the final of the French Open), was eliminated before their projected meeting in the semi-finals.

Early in the contest, Novotna, the No 3 seed, threatened to dispatch Hingis with the superiority of her grass-court play, serving confidently, making



Life's a doddle: Martina Hingis, the Swiss tennis prodigy, models, exclusively for the Independent, a replica of the apparel worn in 1887 by Lottie Dod, the only player younger than Hingis to win the Wimbledon women's singles title Photograph: Andrew Buurman

deep, low approach shots and volleying with a finesse her opponent had rarely seen before.

One of the qualities which has separated Hingis from the majority of competitors, since she burst on the international scene as a 12-year-old winner of the French Open junior title, is

the ability to think her way through tactical problems.

Having steadied her serve, she began to counter her opponent's movements to the net with a variety of precise groundstrokes. Novotna's strategy remained unchanged, even though she was being picked off

and was feeling the effects of an abdominal strain.

Yet Novotna survived five break points in the opening game of the final set and took a 2-0 lead, only for Hingis to transform the threadbare lawn into a canvas for her boldest strokes, prevailing, 2-6, 6-3, 6-3.



Heir apparent: Nick Faldo, the holder, (right) congratulates Tiger Woods after his first round at the Masters, when the young American's inward 30 laid the foundations for a first Green Jacket at 21 years of age

Tiger roars into history to win first Masters with barnstorming demolition of Augusta

It took something spectacular to push Tiger Woods out of the headlines after the first round of the 61st US Masters. "Huston, the eagle has landed" was the verdict on a day when little appeared to be going to plan.

Fearing record low scoring (they were not wrong), the Green Jackets who run the tournament made sure Augusta National was playing hard and fast. A strong breeze made conditions even trickier. Like the old days, said the old-time pros.

The modern-day pros did what modern-day pros do best. Most of them moaned about not being able to break 80, but a few got on with it and still managed something extraordinary. One, called John Huston, held his second shot at the last for an eagle two and took the lead with a 67. Woods scored an innocent-

looking 70, two under par, but this was the day the 21-year-old proved he was the real thing, not a marketing mirage.

The publicity surrounding Woods' first major championship as a professional was overwhelming, except for this brilliant young man. The impact he had made since turning pro six months before extended far outside the golfing world. While Jack Nicklaus was lauding the youngster as his natural successor, *Time* magazine had already proclaimed Woods as one of the 25 most influential people in America. After a year in the game, a report suggested he had brought \$650m (£410m) of "new money" into golf.

As an awed Nicklaus admitted: "Not only does he live up to his publicity, he outperforms it." But not for the first

GOLF BY ANDY FARRELL

nine holes. At the turn in the first round, Woods was four over par. Going nowhere, heading for a missed cut. Just like his playing partner, none other than the defending champion, Nick Faldo, who three-putted five times in a front nine of 41.

Even in such a reflective sport as golf – perhaps more so since there is too much time for an instinctive reaction – to turn a bad situation to good in mid-round is the stuff of only the finest of champions. Faldo managed it to an extent, coming home in 34, but he must have been left with feelings of inadequacy beside Woods' inward 30.

The back-nine record at Au-

gusta is 29 and it was one of the few records not to fall to Woods in the last 63 holes of the tournament. Aligning his power with a magical touch around the greens, Woods did exactly what people feared to a course that is vulnerable to that combination.

He immediately birdied the 10th hole by sinking a 15-foot putt. At the short 12th, he chipped in for another and merely two-putted for a birdie-four at the 13th. He reduced the par-five 15th to a drive, a wedge and a four-foot eagle putt and holed from 12 feet for a birdie at the 17th.

It was the two-iron shot off the 10th tee that changed the course of destiny. "I needed the right club to feel the correct position of my golf swing," Woods said. "I found it with that shot

and tried to carry that feeling with me all week."

A 66 followed in round two as Woods took the lead and he extended it to nine strokes with a 65 on the Saturday. The Augusta gallery – been there, done that, seen them all – streamed out of the gates, stunned into silence. Colin Montgomerie, having been beaten by nine strokes by Woods that day, said simply: "There is no way humanly possible that he is going to lose this tournament."

A 69 on the final day and Woods had become the youngest winner of the Masters at 21 years, three months and 15 days, with the lowest score of 270, 18 under par, and by a record margin of 12 strokes. "I've always dreamt of winning the Masters," Woods said, "but never in the fashion I did."

Komen comes good after a rain omen

Sometimes sporting records appear to be as much a product of those who witness as those who perform – they seem almost willed into being.

On the evening of 22 August, 40,000 spectators in the King Baudouin Stadium – reshaped and renamed from its days as the Heysel – generated an atmosphere of such expectation that it almost gave off a physical charge.

Nine days earlier the athletics followers who had packed into Zurich's Letzigrund stadium had been rewarded with three world records on the track. Now the good people of Brussels wanted their share.

The first serious exercise for their lungs came in the 3,000 metres, where Haile Gebrselassie, Ethiopia's world record holder at 5,000 and 10,000m, was seeking to lower the mark set the previous year by a young Kenyan runner, Daniel Komen.

Gebrselassie failed. An hour later, Komen stepped onto the track with the intention of wresting one of Gebrselassie's records away – the 5,000m record.

For all the obvious talent of this gangling 21-year-old, the objective appeared hugely challenging.

Komen had fallen away behind Gebrselassie in Zurich as the latter had produced a finishing burst which took him through the line in 12min 41.86sec.

Gebrselassie had taken nearly four seconds off the mark he had set himself on the same track two years earlier.

But when Komen took to the track that night in Brussels, he knew two important things. Firstly, his defeat by Gebrselassie had come just three days after he had won the world 5,000m title in Athens, and his long legs had been tired. Secondly, just three days after his

ATHLETICS BY MIKE ROWBOTTOM

Zurich run he had recovered sufficiently to record 3min 29.46sec for 1500m – faster than Seb Coe. Steve Ovett or Steve Cram ever managed.

And something else had happened. Ten minutes before the race, it had rained. Komen took it as a sign from above.

He was taken through to 3,000 metres by the pacemakers. Then he lengthened his loping stride, and suddenly the mortals behind him were sliding backwards.

The crowd began to clap



Daniel Komen: Salutes his 5,000m world record

rhythmically. The commentator began to shriek – "Daniel, you need 2.02, you need 2.02 for the last 800. Come on!"

As Komen worked his way down the last 100 metres, his face a grin of effort, the clock seemed to slow in anticipation of his arrival. It stopped at 12min 39.74sec.

"I just knew I was going to break that world record today," Komen said. "It was in the air all night."

It was one of the great performances: fittingly, it received one of the great receptions.

The monster that ate Paris whets owner's appetite for bigger things

If the old suggestion that outstanding horses are themselves enough to keep racing aficionados warm between the seasons is true then this will not be the winter to be a duvet salesman in either Chantilly, Newmarket or Lambourn.

When Peintre Celebre won the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe in Paris one smoggy October afternoon, he entranced more than those who had scribbled him down for betting purposes. Racing historians also started jotting his name alongside those such as Sea-Bird II, Mill Reef and Dancing Brave as animals who had proved their greatness in Paris. And the beauty is that this pageant will continue.

Daniel Wildenstein, at 80, may have become bored with the piles of Cezannes, Renoirs and Van Goghs he has accumulated down the years, but the masterpiece with a pulse has revitalised him. It would have been easy for the art dealer and bloodstock owner to then retire Peintre Celebre to stud, but Wildenstein has deemed the curtain should be pulled on the culmination of his years of breeding for another season.

Peintre Celebre is by the outstanding sire Nureyev, who was disqualified after passing the post first in the 1981 2,000 Guineas. His mother is the Aiydar mare Peinture Bleue, thus ensuring there is much stamina on the distaff side as there is speed offered by the sire. The outcome of this genetic equation is usually a horse which performs ponderously over eight furlongs

RACING BY RICHARD EDMONDSON

but Peintre Celebre is unique: a thoroughbred with a sprinter's kick who can hold on to his most potent weapon at the end of a middle-distance race – a fusion of Seb Coe and Lindford Christie.

These chromosomes allowed the colt to both dominate his contemporaries in the Prix du Jockey-Club (French Derby) and then the older horses in the Arc. After that they called him a monster, which may be true in one sense but is hardly relevant physically as the little horse, if his name can be used as a guide, is more reminiscent of another excellent practitioner who painted scenes at nearby Montmartre.

As Peintre Celebre scythed five lengths clear to beat the course record by 1.7sec he made the rest look ordinary, which we knew at the time, and were subsequently reminded, could simply not be true. Pilsudski, the runner-up, went on to win the Champion Stakes at Newmarket and the Japan Cup, while the third, Borgia, came within a length of collecting the Breeders' Cup Turf.

Peintre Celebre himself went for a relatively early lie-down in preparation for 1998, in which even greater things are expected of him. We will soon know. In about two months' time, on the Chantilly gallops, the monster will be reawakened.



Mini marvel: Peintre Celebre breaks clear to win the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe in October Photograph: Sporting Life



SHOOK THE WORLD IN 1997

RUGBY UNION BY CHRIS HEWETT

Johnson's Lions in ascendancy 'on their arses'

Rugby has entered its age of Enlightenment, an era in which clipboard-wielding coaches are paid spectacular amounts of money to develop fitter, faster players and foolproof tactical blueprints under scientific conditions. Statistics are the measure of all things: bleep tests, tackle counts, aerobic fitness levels and kicking charts have replaced the chicken vindaloo, the sly left hook and half a dozen verses of "Get 'Em Down, You Zulu Warrior" as the currency of the professional game.

Happily for those of us who flatly refuse to apply the Critique of Pure Reason to 80 minutes worth of rough and tumble on a Saturday afternoon, the union code remains reassuringly adept at consigning the best-laid plans to the garbage can and knocking the cleverest of Clever Dick theories into the middle of next week. On 28 June, in the forbidding surroundings of an emotion-charged King's Park in Durban, Martin Johnson and his Lions flew in the face of presumption, hypothesis and plain common sense to beat the Springboks 18-15 and thus become only the second British Isles party this century to win a series on South African soil.

Jan McGeechan, the Lions' coach, called it "15-man rugby without the ball"; Rob Andrew, the former England outside-half who had tasted both success and failure as a Lion, politely pronounced that the tourists had won the game "on their arses"; and John Bentley, who played on the right wing that day, admitted as recently as last month: "I've gone through the tape many times and every time I watch it, I think the Boks are bound to score." When Jeremy



Stop the Boks: John Bentley halts Pieter Rossouw

Photograph: David Rodgers/Allsport

Guscott, purveyor of the famous match-winning drop goal deep into the final five minutes, let rip in the dressing-room during the interval and demanded that the Lions "play some rugby for once", his colleagues stared blankly at him as though to say: "Jerry, we'll consider it if and when we get to touch the ball."

Quite simply, the Lions produced one of the great rearguard actions in rugby history. Having tackled their way to glory in the Cape Town Test seven days previously, they suspected the Boks would come looking for them with fists clenched, eyes glazed and teeth bared. When the tourists reached King's Park, they knew they were on the menu; the passionate rugby folk of Natal had transformed the stadium into a huge concrete snarl and when

several hundred dancing Zulu warriors burst on to the greensward, it seemed less like pre-match entertainment than the shape of things to come.

Sure enough, the Springboks ran in tries through Joost van der Westhuizen. Percy Montgomery and Andre Joubert (the first an almost inevitable result of a prolonged siege of the Lions' line, the second and third the consequences of rare defensive errors by Alan Tait and Bentley respectively). Yet neither Montgomery nor an out-of-sorts Henry Honiball could maximise the advantage by kicking a single goal and that glaring frailty allowed Neil Jenkins, the human radar, to keep the tourists in touch with five penalties, thus paving the way for Guscott's *coup de grace*. Many rugby revisionists,

startled by the pace and panache of the All Black and Springbok squads who toured here during the autumn, now consider the Lions to have been false prophets, a courageous but distinctly fortunate side who stuck rigidly to a pragmatic but profoundly limited game plan and capitalised mercilessly on self-inflicted Springbok wounds. Such a view misses the whole point, of course. When you play sport at the top level – and levels do not come any more elevated than a Lions Test series – you climb the mountain by whatever route happens to be available. When Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tensing conquered Everest, they did it with the aid of oxygen. Did that make their achievement any the less worthy of celebration?

BOXING BY KEN JONES

Tyson bites the hand that feeds as legend fades

A few hours before Evander Holyfield and Mike Tyson met in Las Vegas last June for the World Boxing Association heavy-weight championship I fell in with a man who thought it likely that Tyson would be disqualified.

This did not strike me as the way to bet but sensation was soon upon us. No longer fighting in accordance with precepts that were central to his violent advancement, unable to handle a contest so rough that both men received stern warnings in the first two rounds, Tyson lost all control and was disqualified on his stool at the end of the third for biting Holyfield's ears.

The extent of Tyson's folly was not immediately apparent. "What the hell is going on in there?" one veteran ringsider exclaimed when Holyfield broke from a clinch to stomp angrily around the ring. "Jesus, he's bitten a slice out of Holyfield's ear," another said.

On our feet, straining for a better view of quite extraordinary proceedings we were further shocked when Tyson charged across the ring to push Holyfield in the back. Astonishingly, Mills Lane, the tough little circuit judge from Reno who took over as referee when Mitch Halpern withdrew following a protest from the Tyson camp, allowed the fight to continue after indicating that he had deducted two points from the crazed challenger.

Before Holyfield could attempt the knock-out he now felt confident of delivering, Tyson bit him again. At the bell Lane first examined Holyfield then crossed the ring to inform Tyson that it was over. In the pandemonium that followed security guards and



Damage done: Close-up of Holyfield's bitten ear

Photograph: Jed Jacobsohn/Allsport

police wrestled with Tyson and his entourage and then plunged into the audience to make arrests. Shortly afterwards the MGM Casino was closed off after the firing of a shot.

Nothing in boxing's turbulent history had matched the disbelief caused by Tyson's pretty obvious emotional collapse. It was not just the aura of invincibility that had slipped from him but the notion of a street fighter's grim purpose.

With his warrior instinct, superior boxing skills and vast experience, Holyfield, as when stopping Tyson seven months earlier, was equipped to exploit the former undisputed champion's fallibility under fire, the confusion caused in him by violent transgressions that had led to imprisonment for the rape of a beauty queen.

If himself running the risk of retribution for rough house tactics, especially such dangerous use of the head that the challenger was stunned by a butt and cut over his right eye early in the second round, Holyfield put paid to Tyson's reputation as one of the greatest heavyweights in history.

An indefinite suspension by the Nevada State Athletic Commission is unlikely to end Tyson's career – a third match with Holyfield would unquestionably be the richest of all time – but the perception of him has altered.

A vivid memory is the rage in Tyson's eyes when fulfilling an obligation to Showtime, the American cable television network that put out the contest. Pointing to a gash in his right eyelid, Tyson snarled: "How

much was I expected to put up with? He was butting me all the time. He butted me in the first fight. I was left with only one eye. My career was on the line. I've got kids to bring up. Who cares about me and my children? The referee wouldn't listen. I had to retaliate."

This from the ghetto fugitive who was programmed to spread terror throughout the heavyweight division.

For once conspicuous by his silence, Don King confined himself to a brief appearance on television. "Mike was ready to fight. I don't why they stopped it," he said lamely. The truth was that Tyson had been found out. No heavyweight has hit with more power or caused more consternation in the division, but he was only at his best when the going was good.

England bask briefly in the glory of Edgbaston's false promise

By the end of the summer, with the familiar sound of crowing Aussies assaulting our eardrums, it was hard to remember much about it but there was one moment in 1997 when everything in the garden of English cricket seemed perfect.

England, thrashed in four consecutive Ashes series, marched into the first Test in Birmingham on 5 June and won. Not only that, they won brilliantly. By nine wickets; and with a full day to spare.

How we relished the moment. "Ashes coming home" a euphoric Edgbaston crowd sang. In the light of what happened subsequently, with normal service resumed and a fifth straight series loss added to the record, it is almost embarrassing to recall that even those who purport to take a sober view of the game were tempted to believe it.

Then again, who would not? After 19 overs of an extraordinary first morning, Australia were 54 for 8! True, the tourists were underprepared, badly out of form and England, heartened by victory in the Texaco Trophy games, sensed they just might strike an early blow. But, even so, this was pinch-yourself stuff.

Yet it did not end there. Following the startling brilliance of Darren Gough and Andrew Caddick, sharing eight scalps as Australia – 118 all out – suc-

CRICKET BY JON CULLEY

cumbed to a swinging ball, came the majesty of Nasser Hussain and Graham Thorpe.

Coming together as England faced their own crisis at 50 for 3, these young batsmen played so well that comparisons with the greats were not, for once, misplaced. Outstanding after tea on the opening day, they were as good if not better on the second, when the first session yielded 135 runs. Hussain, whose driving was an absolute joy, became only the seventh Englishman to make 200 against Australia. The partnership, a record for England's fourth wicket in Ashes Tests, realised 288 at a run a minute.

Even then, England's victory was not assured and a third great effort needed. Australia, for all their troubles, did not roll over. Mark Taylor, their beleaguered captain, revealed the immense depth of his character with a century that not only saved his job but, for a while, looked as though it might even save the match.

No Australian wicket fell between 11.45 on the Saturday and lunch the following day. By 3pm on the fourth afternoon, when a huge but happily brief

thunderstorm broke, Australia were 43 ahead and with five wickets still in hand.

In the past, England might have lost their chance but Gough, Robert Croft and company had discovered the patience and discipline many thought beyond them. And then Mark Ealham suddenly caught the mood, taking the last three Aussie wickets for no runs in 10 deliveries.

England were left needing 118 runs to win and more than a day in which to get them, an order which, with care, even they could achieve comfortably. But having sunk the knife into Australian flesh, Michael Atherton was bent now on twisting it. With the extra hour at England's disposal, the captain determined that the job would be finished not before a half-empty ground on Monday morning but there and then.

Appropriately with his most trusted aide, Alec Stewart, at his side, it was Atherton who delivered the *coup de grace*, the two matching one another in a passage of bravura batting that ensured not only defeat but humiliation, in 87 minutes, for their opponents. Shortly before 7pm, Edgbaston was engulfed in an explosion of joy and dreams of a glorious, vintage summer began. Such a pity we had to wake up...



Birmingham brio: Michael Atherton rushes to congratulate Darren Gough as wickets tumble on the first morning of the first Test at Edgbaston

Photograph: David Ashdown

Pride of Europe humbled by the worst team from antipodean elite

In time, the World Club Championship might be seen as an awakening for the British game on a par with the Kangaroo tour of 1982. While that visit exposed how far behind Britain had fallen at national level, the WCC cast the same unflattering spotlight on standards at club level.

The game that argued this most forcefully was not one of the monumental thrashings that British teams suffered at the hands of antipodean opposition, but the Bradford Bulls' four-point defeat by Auckland at Odsal on the second weekend of the competition.

To put it brutally, we knew that the Halifaxes and Oldhams were heading for some dreadful beatings, but the Bulls were a very different proposition: they had already established themselves as the dominant team in European Super League and they were, after all, facing the bottom side in the equivalent competition down under.

Auckland had sacked their coach, John Monie, and had proved incapable of winning games when the pressure was on. The sheer power of a Bradford team urged on by a big

RUGBY LEAGUE BY DAVE HADFIELD

home crowd would be surely too much for them – and a positive result could even prove a turning point for Britain in the WCC as a whole.

When Auckland had Syd Eru sent off for a high tackle towards the end of the first half, Bradford's task looked highly manageable, despite an 8-2 deficit at the interval.

However, with too many players below their best, they

struggled to get back on terms and then lost the match 20-16 to a late try from Paul Staladi.

Bradford finished up losing all six of their group games – the three away matches by big margins – damning evidence that, while they might be miles ahead of the opposition in Britain, they simply did not rate in world terms.

The quirky nature of the tournament meant that they still qualified for the quarter-finals, where they were beaten for a third time by Auckland, 62-14.

No British team reached the semi-finals, which prompt-

ed plenty of much-needed soul-searching about the shortcomings of the game here.

Bradford drew their own lessons from the humiliation. Last season's squad would have been strong enough to make them favourites for the Super League title in 1998, but they moved to address the weaknesses exposed by the WCC, signing a vastly experienced on-field general in Shaun Edwards and a middle-back of genuine pace in Tevita Vaikona.

Their British rivals might live to regret the wake-up call that Auckland gave them.

Schumacher imperious at his spiritual home

It is the circuit they all revere, even fear: an arena to fire the senses of drivers and spectators alike. Spa-Francorchamps, home of the Belgium Grand Prix is Formula One's supreme challenge and on 24 August it was confirmed as Michael Schumacher's dominion.

Schumacher's ultimate, shabby demise in the championship may have provided the abiding memory of the season, but his imperious skills presented the enduring image of the sport at its most glorious.

The German gave a majestic exhibition of his unrivalled car control to master the rain and the opposition at Monaco. At Spa, however, he conjured a still more remarkable performance. This had all the elements of intelligent strategy, awesome racing, and the showman's style. Close to perfection.

Here the backdrop is the forest of the Ardennes rather than the concrete and harbour of the Principality. Here the cars climb and plunge at mesmerising speed instead of tip-toeing between hotels and apartments.

Schumacher had a Ferrari that rarely looked a match for the Williams-Renault and often appeared inferior to their cars, but given a little assistance from the elements he had the capability to tilt the balance.

He had also an affinity with Spa which stretched back to his debut, in 1991. He was seventh on the grid that day and few doubted Formula One's next superstar had arrived. He registered his maiden victory at the track 12 months later, was second in 1993, first across the line only to be disqualified in 1994 and winner in the two subsequent seasons.

This year the heavens embraced his desires again. Torrential rain brought a spectacular change to the set just before the start, but while others routinely fitted wet tyres and drove out of the pits, Schumacher hung back. He had a hunch the downpour might be brief. Not for the first time, his

MOTOR RACING BY DERICK ALLSOP

instincts were correct and decisive.

He eventually took his place on the grid equipped with intermediate tyres and a car prepared for wet/dry conditions. Even as he sat there, waiting for the start, he was confident he had the race at his mercy.

Released into the contest



Michael Schumacher enjoys his win at the Belgian GP

proper after three laps behind the safety car, ahead of Schumacher were Jacques Villeneuve's Williams and Jean Alesi's Benetton-Renault.

Schumacher made his crucial moves on the fifth lap. First, he squeezed inside Alesi, then forced Villeneuve, another gifted, courageous driver, into meek surrender. By the end of the lap the 28-year-old former champion led the Belgium Grand Prix by six seconds. After another four laps he was 34 seconds clear.

In the stands and along the muddy banks, they acclaimed Schumacher's prominence and one of the great drives of our time. At the time it seemed he would go on to win a third title, that his resourcefulness would deny Williams' technical advantage. In the event, he failed, proving, as he suggested, that he was not Superman after all.

That late summer afternoon in Belgium, you would have sworn he was.



Get a grip: Bradford's Paul Medley is held back by the Auckland defence in a revealing club competition

RUGBY UNION

Exiles are excused from trial as Scots cast wide net

Battered by the Wallabies and blitzed by the Springboks, the Scottish selectors have decided to return to first principles by holding a good, old-fashioned trial match to help them gauge form and fitness.

But, as Chris Hewett reveals, there are complications. Not everyone will be there.

Scotland's bemused and bed-fuddled coaching hierarchy yesterday climbed into their time machine, pressed the "past" button and reappeared in familiar territory long abandoned by European rugby folk: the land of the national trial. Trial? Most Scots already believe their Test team to be guilty on all counts following a couple of criminal displays against Australia and South Africa, but there is at least one mitigating circumstance – the avoidance of an unholo row with England's leading clubs.

The midweek match will take place at Watsonians' Myreside ground in Edinburgh on 7 January and will be restricted to home-based players. Given that a large contingent of top-ranking exiles – Alan Tait, Gregor Townsend, Andy Nicol, Dave Hutton and Doree Weir among them – will be busy preparing for important Allied Dunbar Premiership matches on 10 and 11 January, any attempt to involve them on trial business would inevitably have led to some angry posturing and a flurry of cross-border insults.

Richie Dixon, the national coach, emphasised that the trial was aimed at "aspiring" players who needed a "high-intensity stage" on which to impress, adding intriguingly: "We want to make it clear that every position is there to be competed for."

While it is inconceivable that the Scots will omit the best of their English-based talent for the international against Italy at the end of next month, Dixon's comments were clearly aimed at destroying the comfort zone

inhabited by his Premiership players. If the trial is a success, it will not be long before the Scots make it a "no show, no play" event.

The Welsh selectors, meanwhile, are relishing the opportunity to contrast and compare their two outstanding candidates for the mythically-charged No 10 shirt in this season's Five Nations. Swansea, the league leaders, take on Pontypridd, the champions, at St Helen's today and if ever a battle within a battle was likely to decide the outcome, it is the one between Arwel Thomas and Neil Jenkins.

Thomas, certainly the most naturally gifted stand-off to emerge in Wales since Jonathan Davies, lost his Test place to the more soberly orthodox Jenkins for last month's match with New Zealand at Wembley, but according to Garin Jenkins, the Swansea captain, he is close to his impish best. "He is coming right back to top form and when he plays at that level, he is an out-and-out match-winner," said the former international hooker. If history has anything to do with it, Thomas will come up smelling of roses. Pontypridd have not won at Swansea since 1973.

In England, Newcastle's visit to bottom club Bristol and Richmond's foray into the wild acres of Gloucester are the highlights of the Premiership programme. Newcastle stick with the line-up that lost narrowly to Agen in last weekend's European Conference semi-final. Tim Stimpson, the Lions full-back, remains outside in the chilly stuff, while Richmond must cope with Gloucester's new signing, the Army wing Brian Johnson.

Interestingly, Stimpson is not the only Lion feeling frozen out today. None of the 36 tourists who squeezed past the Springboks in South Africa last summer – 40 if you include the replacements – have been included in a World XV selected by correspondents of the French paper, *L'Equipe*. What is more, there are no Frenchmen either. New Zealand contribute 10 of the side, with the rest made up of Springboks. How the mighty have fallen.



Austin Healey clears Leicester's line during their 22-21 win over Saracens at Vicarage Road yesterday

Photograph: Keith Dobney

Stransky settles score after early shenanigans

David Llewellyn

Saracens 21
Leicester 22

It isn't over until the Tigers stop growling – and Leicester certainly had the drop on the Allied Dunbar Premiership leaders Saracens. A last-minute drop goal by Joel Stransky this second attempt in the space of 60 seconds provided a thrilling finish to what had been a game of scraps, on and off the ball, and earned the South African 17 of his side's points. It was Leicester's first away win in the league since December 1996.

If there was too much careless kicking, there were also patches of stunning play by both sides. The two defences did well and Leicester, fielding a full set of international forwards

from the start for the first time, did not find it easy against a combative Saracens pack.

The sides thundered into each other from the kick-off, with or without the ball. The referee, Ed Morrison, spent as much time with the whistle out of his mouth lecturing the various warring factions as he did blowing for infractions.

But it was great entertainment for the 14,291 supporters at Vicarage Road – the largest crowd to watch a club game in England outside Leicester.

Saracens' Paul Wallace and Leicester's Graham Rowntree were shown a yellow card after some skulduggery at a scrum; earlier Danny Grewcock and Tigers' captain Martin Johnson had been carded for shenanigans after a brawl broke out in two different places on the pitch.

While most of the forwards seemed intent on getting involved, the impressive Sarries flanker Alex Bennett got dangerously close to a try. The resulting penalty after the brawl went Leicester's way and a good position was lost.

It took both teams more than half an hour to turn their attention to some serious rugby. By then Saracens, defending a run of 10 matches unbeaten in the League, had edged ahead courtesy of two penalties and a drop goal by Michael Lynagh, to two Joel Stransky goals.

The pace then picked up and there was some marvellous stuff as both sides hammered away at each other. Saracens' Ryan Constable and Brendon Daniel put in chips for each other as they made inroads down the left but Waisale Serevi picked up the

final kick ahead, raced across the width of the pitch behind his line before kicking clear to lift the pressure.

Another penalty, Stransky's third success in four attempts, levelled the scores in the first minute of the second half, but Saracens could have taken the lead. Franquais Pienaar was galloping to the line when he was stopped in his tracks by a shuddering Darren Garkrath tackle and, worse, he lost the ball in contact.

Seven minutes later Stransky ran a stunning angle before slipping the ball to his fellow South African Fritz van Heerden and the lock bulldozed his way over for a try. Stransky converted.

Initially Saracens flagged but they eventually caught the Tigers. The ball emerged from a ruck and ended up in the

hands of their Australian centre Ryan Constable. He skinned the Tigers' defence for a try converted by Lynagh.

Three minutes later came Saracens' second, Bennett, burst clear, found Richard Wallace, and the winger found another gear as he raced to the line.

Lynagh failed with the conversion and it was a crucial miss because Stransky's fourth penalty, and that drop goal, settled things.

Saracens: Three Cornishall, R Wallace, Conversion Lynagh, Penalties Lynagh 2, Drop goal Lynagh, Leicester: Try Van Heerden, Conversion Stransky, Penalties Stransky 4, Drop goal Stransky.

Saracens: G Johnson (M Sneyd 36-40 and 70, B Daniel, R Cornishall, S Rowntree, M Lynagh, K Bracken, R Gray (A Over 64), G Chuter, P Wallace, P Jones, D Grewcock, A Bennett, B Pienaar, B Pienaar, T Diprose (capt).

Leicester: A Leese, A Healey, J Overend, S Potts, L Lloyd, J Stransky, W Serevi, G Rowntree (P Freshwater, T B Cook, D Garton, M Johnson (capt), F van Heerden, M Corry, D Addison, T B Cook, E Miller (L Moody, 54).

Referee: E Morrison (Bristol).

BASKETBALL

Reluctant Leopards finish with a flourish

Richard Taylor

Leicester 108
London Leopards 122

Leicester added basketball for the first time to the British tradition of Boxing Day sport yesterday. But, the English, at least, rarely had a look in as the London Leopards grudgingly travelled to the Granby Halls for the Budweiser League fixture and won.

The Riders' coach Bob Donewald and his Leopards' counterpart, Billy Mims, used their full quota of five Americans

each for the first nine minutes. By then Leopards led 36-24 after weathering an opening three-point storm from Leicester.

Mims unsuccessfully applied to the League to postpone the game, provoking a typical response from fellow American Donewald. "Boxing Day isn't even a holiday in the States. Maybe he's a born-again Englishman," he said.

Riders, on the fringes of the play-off quarter-finals, showed their strength and frailties as three of their first five baskets were from long range as they opened a 13-5 lead.

But under the basket Billy

Singleton and James Havrilla were outmanoeuvred by Leopards' Makebba Perry, Robert Youngblood and John White.

White's three-pointer gave Leopards' their first lead at 27-24, an advantage they extended to 54-34. But the London team hit cruise control too early as Boon, Waldron and Singleton dragged the Riders back to trail 77-72.

Leopards regrouped and the Riders revival was ended by an Englishman. Jason Crum's three-point play inspiring Perry and Eric Burks to close the Leopards' performance with a display of party-time dunks.

HOCKEY

Midlands seek to regain title

The Women's Under 21 Territorial Championship starting tomorrow at the Milton Keynes National Stadium will be missing several of England's young stars, including those in the Indoor Training Squad preparing for the defence of England's European title.

Nevertheless, the passion and commitment seen at this annual Christmas-time event is likely to be as strong as ever.

The first edit from Australian Chris Spice, the recently appointed EHA Director of Performance, has placed restrictions on the availability of players receiving Lottery money.

Players will only be available with the agreement of their National Senior coaches.

East will struggle to retain their title which is likely to pass back to the Midlands, the only other territory to have won it.

Midland's squad is liberally scattered with players with National League experience including Sutton's Jackie Bull and Natalie Hannah and Otton's Sally Wright and five of their squad have already played in the England Under-21 side. The game on Monday morning between the two territories should settle this year's title.

— Bill Collwill

SAILING

Ingvall propels Nicorette into early lead

After a perfect start from Sydne Harbour, Sweden's Ludde Ingvall in Nicorette took the early lead in the 630-mile Sydney to Hobart race yesterday.

It took Ingvall, who has turned the former Whitbread contender Charles Jourdain into a downwind specialist, a little time to overhaul the biggest boat in the 115-strong fleet, George Snow's Brindabella, but once under spinnaker and outside the heads guarding the entrance to the harbour, he started to pull away.

The sunshine and 15-knot north-easterly attracted what was said to be a record specta-

tor fleet for what is both a traditional Boxing Day spectacle and the finale to the Southern Cross series.

And the day was not without incident. Local boat Weowina Winna, skippered by Robert Markie of Middle Harbour Yacht Club, was forced to retire early, while a second yacht, Max Prentice's She's Apples II, was hit by a spectator boat. The yacht returned to the host Cruising Yacht Club of Australia in Rushcutters' Bay, completed repairs and restarted. The Bowman, Bruce Kerridge, said the people on the powerboat "just froze" as the collision became inevitable.

— Stuart Alexander

RUGBY LEAGUE

Saints slated by Wigan's onslaught

Peter Aspinall

Wigan 46
St Helens 2

The word on the terraces at Central Park yesterday suggested that many St Helens fans had boycotted this festive friendly because their side was so weak. The evidence out on the paddock rather proved that their decision was based on common sense as Wigan ran in 10 tries and conceded none.

The St Helens team – basically an Academy outfit containing 11 teenagers – was missing 13 regular senior players, including Chris Joynt, Bobbie Goulding as well as their new £350,000 record signing, Paul Sculthorpe.

Wigan, in stark contrast, were parading two new signings, the Australians Mark Bell and Tony Mestrov, and while they also lacked a handful of notable pedigree players – Tony Smith and Denis Betts to name but two – the gulf in class became apparent very quickly.

After Wigan had two tries disallowed, Jon Clarke rounding off a splendid 80m surge from Jason Robinson, Henry Paul added another try when he glided through some fragile defence and while the Saints' scrum-half, Paul Wellens, knocked over a penalty Wigan were soon back in the danger zone, Andy Farrell slipping his marker at the scrum before putting Craig Murdoch over on the stroke of half-time.

The second half began with four tries in the opening 10 minutes – two for Robinson, with Kris Radlinski and Gary Connolly the other scorers. Danny Ellison and Lee Gilmour crossed for a further brace as Saints wilted, Ellison grabbing another following tremendous approach work from the prop Neil Cowie.

Saints' stand-in captain, Anthony Sullivan, tried valiantly to motivate his players but the game had been out of St Helens' grasp ever since the teams were read out.

The game represented a welcome return to Wigan for the new coach John Monie, who took over six weeks ago, while the 20-year-old winger, Rob Smyth, was playing his first game for 17 months.

Wigan: Radlinski, Robinson, Connolly, Bell, Ellison, Paul Wellens, Cowie, Clarke, Hansen, Haughton, Holgate, Farrell, Sculthorpe, Mestrov, Tait, Hall, Cardis, Simon, Smith.

St Helens: Johnson, Stuart, Hogg, Cross, Sullivan, Barrow, Wellens, Latham, Anderson, O'Neil, Pollock, Penrice, Hammond, Substitutes: Newell, Hamilton, Arwing, Price, Newell, Finblitt.

Referee: S Cummings (Widnes).

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AROUND THE RESORTS

Country	Comment	Area	Last	Low	High	Notes
ANDORRA						
Switzerland	Abundant snow at all levels	80%	21-12	20	7	Snowy, good
AUSTRIA						
Alpine	Restricted to upper areas	80%	21-12	20	7	Good snow
BULGARIA						
Borovetz	Reasonable at high level, but	70%	21-12	20	7	Good
CANADA						
Whistler	Fairly good snow	40%	21-12	20	7	Good
FRANCE						
Les Arcs	Much improved conditions	60%	21-12	20	7	Good
Les Deux Alpes	Good snow, but high level	50%	21-12	20	7	Good
ITALY						
Corvara	Good snow, but high level	60%	21-12	20	7	Good
Switzerland	Good snow, but high level	60%	21-12	20	7	Good
NORWAY						
Gaular	Fairly good snow	60%	21-12	20	7	Good
SPAIN						
Sierra Nevada	Good snow, but high level	60%	21-12	20	7	Good
SWITZERLAND						
Grindelwald	Good snow, but high level	60%	21-12	20	7	Good
Switzerland	Good snow, but high level	60%	21-12	20	7	Good
UNITED STATES						
Sierra Nevada	Good snow, but high level	60%	21-12	20	7	Good

Snow Reports supplied by Ski Hotline

SPORTING DIGEST

American football
ALPHA BOWL: Washington 51 Michigan State 23

Basketball
NBA: Utah 107 Houston 103; Chicago 90 Miami 80
BULWISER LEAGUE: Leicester 108 London Leopards 122

Cricket

An investigation led by the former Indian captain Kapil Dev will take place into the abandonment of the second one-day international between India and Sri Lanka at Indore on Christmas Day after the pitch was declared too dangerous for play after three overs. Jagmohan Dalmiya, the president of the International Cricket Council, said: "The abandonment of the match due to unfit conditions anywhere in the world is deplorable." The third one-day international is to be played at Goa on Sunday.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP Semi-final
(New Delhi): Australia beat India by 119 runs.

AUSTRALIA
19 Clark b Bhan 31
J Bracken run out 33
M Jones b Bhan 1
K Gibson b Bhan 5
K Gibson not out 23
B Caver b Harman 1
M Gibson b Harman 1
C Mason b Jan b David 0
J Potts not out 0
Extras (21, nb 1, wd 1)
Total (for 7, 32 overs) 123

Football
1-66, 2-80, 3-63, 4-88, 5-113, 6-121, 7-121

Bowling: Margaret 4-0-13-0; Chaudhary 4-27-0; Rao 5-1-19-1; David 6-0-21-0; Bhat 7-0-25-3; Kulkarni 6-0-21-0

INDIA

1A Jan b Magno 18
A Chopra c Jones b Fitzpatrick 10
C Ahar b b Fitzpatrick 48
19 Rau run out 10
S Hankehan run out 1
S Shaw run out 1
19 Shaw b Fitzpatrick 6
P Chaudhary not out 0
D Kulkarni b Mason 0
N David not out 0
Extras (b-1, lb-1, w-5)
Total (for 9, 30 overs) 104
Fall: 1-8, 2-34, 3-71, 4-72, 5-73, 6-93, 7-103, 8-104, 9-104

Bowling: Fitzpatrick 7-1-18-3; Calver 4-1-18-0; Mason 7-1-10-0; Potts 5-0-22-0; Magno 5-0-22-1; Fahy 2-0-12-0

The Essex all-rounder Graham Napier produced a superb spell of in-swinging bowling to take four wickets in 15 balls and lead England Under-19 to victory by 47 runs over South African Schools in Port Elizabeth on Christmas Eve. Earlier the England captain, Owais Shah, was his sides top-scorer with a classy 67.

TOUR MATCH (Port Elizabeth, one day): England Under-19 288 (O A Shah 67, 50 overs); South African Schools 221 (M van Wyk 60, J Kent 58; G R Napier 4-43, 44.5 overs). England Under-19 won by 47 runs.

Football

Vince Bartram has returned to Arsenal after rejecting a two-and-a-half year deal with Huddersfield Town. The 22-year-old goalkeeper had played 12 matches in a two-month loan spell, but could not agree personal terms with the First Division club.

Motor racing

The Miral Formula One team has signed the 19-year-old Argentine Esteban Tuero for next season while Ferrari have chosen Luca Badoer, a 28-year-old Italian with 29 Grands Prix behind him, as his test driver for the 1998 season.

Rugby League

FRIENDLY MATCHES: Featherstone 18 Wakefield 12; Leeds 32 Halifax 14; Wigan 46 St Helens 2.

Rugby Union

The Scottish Rugby Union will hold a trial match at Myreside on 7 January, three days after the final round of the European qualifying tournament with the teams drawn from home-based district players. "Because of the English club programme it's now impossible to hold a trial match that includes players based in England," said the national coach Richie Dixon. The Scots last held a trial match in 1984. The Scotland director of rugby Jim Telfer said: "It will give the

selectors an opportunity to assess the home-based players ahead of the Scotland and Scotland A matches at the end of January." Scotland play Italy in Torino on 24 January and Scotland A face Northern Transvaal on 23 January.

ALLIED DUNBAR Premiership One: Saracens 21 Leicester 22.

WELSH NATIONAL LEAGUE Division One: Blackwood (10) 10, Caerphilly (24) 62, Blackwood: Try Jones, Conversion Lay, Penalties Lay, Caerphilly: Tryes C Brown 3, I Phillips 2, R Biddop, Newport 6, 1 0 0 62, 252, 2

WELSH NATIONAL LEAGUE Division Two: Blackwood (10) 10, Caerphilly (24) 62, Blackwood: Try Jones, Conversion Lay, Penalties Lay, Caerphilly: Tryes C Brown 3, I Phillips 2, R Biddop, Newport 6, 1 0 0 62, 252, 2

CLUB MATCH: Harrogate 13 West Harrogate 7.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

● I feel I am coming home. Jürgen Klinsmann on re-signing for Tottenham Hotspur.

● It's nice when you reach middle age and can go in another direction. Delfa Smith, celebrity cook and now major shareholder at First Division Norwich City.

● To me, he's the best all-round player in Britain. Alex Ferguson, the manager of Manchester United on the recuperating Roy Keane.

● I hope people know what we've been through. Karen Smithies, the captain of England, on her team's exhausting schedule in the women's World Cup in India.

Rieper
wear th

Saints slated by Wigan's onslaught

Wigan
St. Helens

Second coming of Fritz could be the answer to all our prayers



THE GAFFER TAPES

He's back. Fritz Unstutz is back at the Old Cornfield. The whole club has been lifted by the news which was announced on Radio Stodge-thorpe's morning phone-in. A constant stream of callers had rung up to complain in the strongest terms that the chairman was a skindint who never signed anybody and Sir Hiram Fiem got so wound up he phoned in and said he was proving everybody wrong by bringing Fritz back.

Unfortunately this wasn't actually true at the time so we had to make a quick phone call to Toriepartie Split, the Balkan side we sold him to two years ago, and come up with a lot of ready to persuade them to do business. You might imagine that this would be a problem but, in between announcing the news and clinching the deal our shares had rocketed. So Sir Hiram sold 10 per cent of his holding at an inflated price, let slip news of a hitch and bought them back at bottom dollar, then used the profit to buy him.

ing as well after the unfortunate circumstances surrounding his departure but he has fallen out of favour with his national boss since leaving these shores and was looking to get back in the limelight to enhance his World Cup chances.

The chairman did have to eat a fair slab of humble pie. If you remember he went on telly to announce he wouldn't use Fritz's old shirt to wipe his backside after Fritz walked out at the end of his legendary record-breaking season with the club. It soon emerged that Sir Hiram's wife on the boardroom table. The chairman might have accepted all of this but, when Unstutz shamed him by turning up with jeans on at the golf club annual dinner he had to go. It cost Sir Hiram - who had invited Fritz on to his table - his chance of being club captain.

In the circumstances I thought it was very magnanimous of Sir Hiram to begin the press conference by publicly using Fritz's old shirt instead of Andrex - it was just a shame only Channel Four were prepared to show it.

At least that is all behind us now and already the shop is selling out of both Fritz's old No 12 shirt, and the specially printed toilet paper the commercial department rushed out. The ideal stocking filer for our fans, if only the team were so alert.

Fritz's arrival is very timely as he is brilliant at charades and we're playing a lot of that right now as we're holed up in a hotel for the Christmas programme. I know Ruud Gullit thinks it is better to let the players home at Yuletide but we had a vote and they'd rather go to a hotel. This is partly due to team-bonding but mainly because most of the lads have young kids and tired wives at home while the hotel we use is staffed by university students on Christmas leave.

I'm not too unhappy with that given my own domestic circumstances (the latest from my solicitor is that he has negotiated custody of the electric carving knife but only in return for giving my soon-to-be-ex-wife rights to the microwave. Next step is a meeting to discuss a venue for talks about the CD collection. Sometimes I wonder if these lawyers have our best interests at heart).

At least I've been able to save on the Christmas presents this year. Last year I bought my wife a lovely set of dishcloths and a new ironing board and she didn't appreciate them at all.

There has been one problem. Broccoli Moore broke curfew to go round and see an old flame but the locks had been changed. Unfortunately he had a few too many and had the bright idea of chopping down the town square Christmas tree and using it as a battering ram to break down her door. Mistake No 2 was not knowing she had moved town

and sold her house to Inspector Cools instead.

He is a good friend of the club and, like all the season ticket holders, thinks Broccoli is wonderful despite being the worst £9m signing in football history. He might even have forgiven Broccoli mashing his front door but the tree wasn't a non-drop one and the sight of those pine needles on the floor was the final straw. Now Broccoli has been charged with theft, assault and resisting arrest and I think we'll have to leave him out today.

We're also without Ivor Niggle, who has heavy bruising following a pre-Christmas fight over the last La-La in the local toyshop. This was compounded by his two-year-old giving him a right going over for coming home without the Teletubbie doll. Shaun Prone has a head injury after he dozed off in Midnight Mass and fell on the stone floor.

Barry Gaffer was talking to Glenn Moore

Rieper is proud to wear the hoops

The former West Ham defender Marc Rieper is a happy man after swapping life in London's East End for the East End of Glasgow. Simon Buckland reports.

The Danish defender Marc Rieper, who left West Ham for Celtic earlier this season, knows that the next two weeks could make or break his new club's season, as the championship-chasing Celts face St Johnstone at McDiarmid Park today before entertaining the leaders, Rangers, on 2 January.

"I am very pleased with the way the season has gone so far and I feel we would have settled for a point behind in the league and the Coca-Cola Cup," Rieper said. "I am delighted with the quality of players around me at Celtic, it has surprised me, and I feel none would be out of place in Premiership sides in England."

"Collectively, Celtic, like Rangers and Hearts, would do well in the Premiership, though I still think Scottish football needs greater depth," the Dane added. "There needs to be at least six or seven teams chal-

lenging at the top to improve standards both domestically and in European competition." Rieper knows his Danish team-mate Brian Laudrup remains an inspirational figure at Ibrox and a thorn in Celtic's side. "Brian would be a top star anywhere. That has already been proved beyond any doubt," he said. "He can win games virtually single-handedly and I would say any club in Europe would be proud to have him in their side."

Rieper hopes to return to the Celtic side today, as does the French defender Stéphane Mahé, after missing the 5-0 defeat of Hibernian last weekend because of muscle strains. Rangers face the one team who have beaten them in the league this season - Dundee United, who were 2-1 winners at Tannadice Park on 25 October. While the champions will be the favourites, Rangers' only domestic home defeat also came against United: a 1-0 Coca-Cola Cup quarter-final loss.

That was sealed by a magnificent Gary McSwegan volley in extra time but, since losing the final of that competition to Celtic, United have struggled to regain momentum. Rangers, who thumped championship-

chasing Hearts 5-2 last weekend, will again be without a number of key players, with Paul Gascoigne, Gordon Durie and Rino Gattuso all suspended.

The Rangers goalkeeper Andy Goram and their captain, Richard Gough, are still struggling with hamstring injuries, although Jonas Thern could return to the midfield. He returned home to Sweden to deal with a family matter and was forced to withdraw from the Tynecastle game.

Hearts will be hoping to get back on track against Dunfermline. Their manager, Jim Jefferies, could recall Thomas Flögel. The Austrian striker was left on the bench against Rangers for tactical reasons.

The Republic of Ireland defender Alan Kernaghan is to stay with St Johnstone until the end of the season. Kernaghan has swapped Manchester City's reserves for the Scottish Premier Division and is anxious to help the Perth club retain their place in the top flight. The Saints' manager, Paul Sturrock, was anxious to secure his services on a long-term basis, after Kernaghan completed a three-month loan spell last weekend in the 2-1 defeat to Dundee United.



Marc Rieper, the former Hammer, joins the Celtic party

Photograph: Graham Stuart

SIDELINES

Rarely trod path twixt N5 and N17

Strange but true: Tottenham have signed as many Argentinians as Arsenal players since the war, while their visitors in tomorrow's derby currently have more Frenchmen in their squad than they have bought wearers of the north London cockerel over the same period.

There has not been a deal between the clubs since 1977, and even then it was a free transfer. Pat Jennings, after 472 games in Spurs' goal, was deemed to be past it, yet went on to amass a 237 appearances in eight years at Arsenal. Willie Young and Steve Walford made the same move that year, the two centre-backs reuniting with Terry Neill, the ex-Gunner who knew their capabilities from his two years as manager at White Hart Lane.

Neill's predecessor at Spurs, Bill Nicholson, swapped Jimmy Robertson for Arsenal's David Jenkins in 1968 - one of his less auspicious signings - and the last Highbury player for whom their rivals paid a fee was Laurie Brown, a £40,000 buy in 1965.

Jimmy Brain, a Welshman in the Arsenal side who lost to Cardiff in the 1927 FA Cup final, left them for Spurs, while the England forward George Hunt made the opposite switch 10 years later. The great Arsenal winger Joe Hulme managed Spurs after the war - but how many wearing red and white tomorrow are aware that the club's greatest manager, Herbert Chapman, reached his playing prime in the lilywhite of the other mob?

Ten things that Wolves' Finn, Mixu Paatelainen, might be missing today



- 1 The world's finest vodka. So potent that the famous Rajamaki distillery used to make anti-tank "cocktail" weapons and pure alcohol motor fuel.
- 2 Winters so inspiring they drive you to existential poetry and deep contemplation. And suicide.
- 3 Manic summers. Mostly spent drinking vodka.
- 4 The national trait, sisu, meaning gutsy or resilient. Needed at Molineux.
- 5 The delights of reindeer, snow grouse and many other indigenous species. Best enjoyed stewed, and accompanied with vodka.
- 6 The hundreds of thousands of young, Swedish women looking to spend money and have a good time that are the largest single group of tourists to Finland. (West Midlands tourists come mainly from the East Midlands.)
- 7 The state beer, wine and spirit outlet, Alko.
- 8 Kristinakaupunki, an unspoilt town founded in 1649. Its narrowest street, Catwhipper's Lane, is 299cm wide.
- 9 Finnish humour. Involves vodka and a smile.
- 10 The real Santa Claus of Finnish Lapland. Rosy-cheeked and happy.

NAME OF THE GAME

No 15: INVERNESS CALEDONIAN THISTLE
The newest club in British league football was born three years ago out of an amalgamation of Inverness Caledonian and Inverness Thistle. Both clubs dated back to the last century and the merger, after decades of rivalry, created great local controversy. After amalgamation the club joined the new Scottish Third Division in 1994, and won promotion last season.

THIS WEEK

HISTORY LESSON

On 25 December 1946, Tottenham played Coventry away in a Second Division game and lost 3-0.

The next afternoon, Spurs entertained Coventry in the second part of the traditional Yuletide-Boxing Day double-header and managed to achieve a result that would be welcome at the moment - a 0-0 draw.

On the same dates, Barnsley drew 4-4 with Southampton, again in the Second Division, and The Dell rematch ended 1-1, while Crystal Palace of the Third Division (South), won 6-1 at home to Torquay, then lost 2-1 the next day.

It is interesting to imagine football still being the kind of sport where home players invited visitors to Christmas lunch. Jürgen Klinsmann at Ian Wright's for tea?

Anyone needing a reminder of what a difference a year can make should look at the Second Division table as it was after the Boxing Day programme 12 months ago.

The leaders were Brentford, who were one point ahead of Luton, who themselves were five points clear of third-placed Bury. Yet neither of the top two won promotion and 12 months later they are both languishing around the relegation zone. Burnley, who had high play-off hopes a year ago, are also struggling to get away from the foot of the table.

Bury went on to win promotion, with Stockport (fifth after Boxing Day) taking the other automatic promotion place. Crewe, in 11th place a year ago, beat Brentford in the play-off final. Watford and Bristol City beware.

THIS WEEK'S TRANSFERS

Transfers
Vitali Molodtsov (forward) Grasshopper Zurich to Coventry (£250k)
Steven Brown (forward) Birmingham to Reading (£200,000)
Jürgen Klinsmann (forward) Sampdoria to Tottenham (£750,000)
Chris Frieson (forward) Middlesbrough to Northampton (£750,000)

Loans/forfeits
Miroslav Klose (forward) Eintracht Frankfurt to Southampton (trial)
Jesse Riedinger (defender) Brentford (loan) to Southampton (trial)

Contributors: Phil Shaw, Nick Harris, Paul Newman
Readers' contributions welcome. Send to: Sidelines, Sports Desk, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. e-mail address: sport@independent.co.uk

Referees and linesmen on receiving end of Iberian anger as Israelis indulge in in-fighting

SPAIN

It seems unlikely that Jesus Gil, the outspoken president of Atletico Madrid, sent too many Christmas cards to referees this year. He was certainly not happy with Miguel Perez Lasa, who took charge of his club's 3-1 Primera Division defeat to Barcelona last weekend.

"It's the limit. I think there was an agreement for them to score goals in the second half," Gil raged. "It was robbery, a scandal. The referee must have been drunk."

This outburst came only two weeks after top-flight Spanish referees went on strike for one round of fixtures, in protest at abuse from players and club officials.

Last weekend their less well-off colleagues in the lower levels had to suffer more than verbal attacks. In the Second, Third and Fourth Divisions no fewer than four matches saw referees or linesmen suffer physical assaults.

A linesman was concussed

by a full water bottle hurled from the crowd at an Atletico Madrid B-team fixture, another was pelted by stones at Pegoso, and a referee was punched in the stomach by a fan at Puerta Bonita.

At Novelda, in the worst incident of the day, a linesman was taken to hospital after being hit on the head by a seat thrown from the stands.

"Until one of us is murdered, it does not seem that people are going to be concerned about the seriousness of the situation," Antonio Lopez Nieto, one of Spain's top referees, said.

"This weekend, thank God, we all escaped alive but a tragedy could have occurred. Referees and linesmen in the lower divisions are playing with their lives each Sunday."

Lopez Nieto called for maximum jail sentences to be imposed on anyone convicted of assaulting match officials. He did not rule out another strike by referees and linesmen.

ISRAEL

In Israel last weekend the trouble was not fans assaulting officials - but linesmen fighting each other.

According to Haaretz newspaper, the scrap broke out in a taxi taking the referee Eyal Tzur and the linesmen Shai Ossidon and Reuven Gino to a league match. Ossidon, who has just been awarded a FIFA international badge, reportedly said to Gino: "I am going to officiate in Europe and will do duty-free shopping in London while you will have to make do with Ashdod and Ashkelon." - apparently the

Israeli equivalents of Coventry and Burnley.

Gino, it seems, was not impressed, and the two came to blows and had to be separated by Tzur and the taxi-driver. The referee made a report to the Israeli Referees' Association, which is investigating the affair.

IRAN

Iran have replaced the head of their Football Association, firing Dariush Mostafavi, who had caused controversy by trying to replace the popular coach, Valdir Vieira, after he led them to the World Cup finals.

Reports in Tehran said that

Mohsen Safaei Farahani, a former official in the ministries of energy and industry who was on the FA's executive board, has taken over.

Mostafavi, who had held the post for the past three years, and who officially resigned for "health reasons", had been accused of delaying Iranian preparations for the World Cup finals by seeking to replace Vieira - who is a national hero despite being a Brazilian - with either Johan Cruyff or Carlos Bilardo.

COLOMBIA

America Cali players were stripped nearly naked by their fans after they won the Colombian title last weekend.

After a 2-0 win over Bucaramanga which sealed a 3-0 aggregate success in the championship play-off, hundreds of supporters broke through a police cordon and stripped all the America players of their kit and any jewellery

being worn. Undeterred, the team managed a lap of honour - draped in flags. It was their first title since 1992.

ARGENTINA

Argentina is setting up a special police unit with powers to deal with worsening football violence after a fan was shot dead at a First Division match.

A decree will make the fight against violence the direct responsibility of the government's Security Department, which will set up a database of known hooligans.

WORLD CUP COUNTDOWN

165 days..

and counting until the start of the World Cup finals in France

There was bad news this week for the Derby County defender, Igor Stimac, when Croatia coach, Miroslav Blazevic, named a preliminary squad of 30 players for the World Cup finals in France. Stimac, who has spent much of the season injured, was one of three players dropped from the squad. The others were the former Nottingham Forest defender, Nikola Jerkan, and Nikola Jurcovic. "We need some fresh blood to rejuvenate the team," Blazevic said. The three missing men had been discarded, he added, for reasons of lack of form, age and health problems. The squad will be reduced to 22 players in time for the finals.

- Rupert Metcalf

ON WEDNESDAY IT WAS THEM.

Draw date: 24/12/97. The winning numbers: 5, 6, 11, 29, 36, 41. Bonus number: 47.

Total Sales: £35,641,748. Prize Fund: £16,038,786 (45% of ticket sales)

CATEGORY	NO. OF WINNERS	AMOUNT FOR EACH WINNER	TOTAL EACH TIER
Match 6 (Jackpot)	2	£2,491,514	£4,983,028
Match 5 plus bonus ball	6	£255,539	£1,533,234
Match 5	691	£1,356	£937,236
Match 4	38,750	£57	£2,054,750
Match 3	645,604	£10	£6,456,040
TOTALS	683,053		£45,024,778

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Prize paid by cheque unless stated otherwise. All prizes are subject to verification.

IT CAN BE DONE



THE NATIONAL LOTTERY

In the event of any discrepancy in the above, the data contained in Camelot's central computer system shall prevail.



SPORT

Saturday 27 December 1997



Chips with everything: Andy Cole scores Manchester United's second goal against Everton at Old Trafford yesterday, the striker's deft touch lifting the champions six points clear at the top of the Premiership Photograph: Dan Chung/Reuters

Cole's confidence compounds Everton's seasonal misery

Guy Hodgson

Manchester United2
Everton0

Alex Ferguson denies it vigorously but Manchester United are disappearing into the distance while barely breaking out of a trot. This win puts them six points clear at the top of the Premiership and the most difficult hurdle they had to face yesterday was getting their supporters through the Trafford Park streets, closed because of gate damage.

As for Everton, forget it. They were not so much beaten as slaughtered, the scoreline flatteringly them to a face-lifting degree. You try to find reasons for believing they will escape relegation - but with performances like this it is very hard.

It was not as if United had their strongest side out. Peter Schmeichel had a slight back strain and Teddy

Sheringham and Ryan Giggs were rested. The visitors, too, were short of key players but these days even an Everton team with Slaven Bilic, Gary Speed and Duncan Ferguson hardly inspire fear. They are second bottom and second rate.

That is not how you would describe United, whose biggest enemy now would appear to be complacency, a danger that Ferguson is aware of. "It is poppycock to talk about winning the title by March," he wrote in the programme. "The memory of losing that 12-point lead to Blackburn and slipping up against Leeds on the last lap is burned into me too deeply to fall into that kind of trap."

Certainly they avoided it yesterday. Kevin Pilkington made only his third Premiership start, but frankly Schmeichel could have played such was the lack of threat from Everton. They managed only one shot on target all afternoon.

Apart from making 16-year-old Francis Jeffers the club's second youngest player after Joe Royle by bringing him on as a substitute, the afternoon had only one redeeming characteristic for Everton: they somehow slipped away from Old Trafford without an extra portion of Christmas stuffing.

Once Henning Berg had headed

United in front after 13 minutes the match was over as a contest. Shot after shot rained in on the Everton goal, but only Andy Cole could find the net.

Berg's goal came from David Beckham's corner from the left which Ronny Johnsen headed into Earl Barrett's knee. The ball might have already crossed the line but

Berg put the matter beyond doubt, heading in the rebound from a range of two feet.

A minute later Thomas Myhre contorted himself excellently to save Paul Scholes' flamboyant volley and then Craig Short twice had to make blocks from Cole and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. In the 17th minute a lovely pass from Nicky Butt down the

right wing set Beckham free, his shot flicking the bar before going over. After 29 minutes United had the ball in the net again when Solskjaer's cross was met at the far post by Beckham and turned in by Cole. Had Beckham gone for goal it would have counted, but the extra pass made the effort offside.

Cole looked mortified by the decision but erased his disappointment five minutes later with a goal that said everything about his newly found self-belief. A year ago the only chip the £7m striker would have contemplated was one with salt and vinegar on. His confidence gone, he preferred to blast and hope rather than place shots.

It is a different Cole now, however, and when Butt passed to him 20 yards off his line, and beat him with a deft flick of his right foot so subtle it could have had Eric Cantona on the delivery end of it. The Ever-

ton goalkeeper could merely watch it go into the top corner.

The second-half should have completed the rout, instead United let Everton off the hook. The closest they came to adding to their score was after 51 minutes when Cole's flick gave Solskjaer a run on goal. He had time but no accuracy and his shot skewed horribly wide.

It did not matter and never looked like it would. United hardly broke sweat yesterday.

"It was an embarrassing 90 minutes," Howard Kendall, the Everton manager, said. "Men against boys."

Manchester United (4-3-1-2): Pilkington; G Neville, Berg, Polster (McCaig, 76), P Neville (Curtis, 82); Beckham (Robson, 66), Johnsen, Butt, Scholes, Cole, Solskjaer. Substitutes not used: Sheringham, Giggs.

Everton (3-5-2): Myhre; Short, Watson (Jeffers, 14), Tiler, Barrett (Allen, 65), Ozer, Ferry, Ball (Thomson, 78), Hinchcliffe, Bernby, Cadamarteri. Substitutes not used: Thomas, Gerrard (94).

Referee: U Rennie (Sheffield).

More reports, pages 22, 23

Keeper Southall samples low life with the Shrimpers

The difference was almost 50,000 as Neville Southall, Welsh international and the rock of Everton's defence for 16 years, made his down-table debut yesterday.

As the Toffees were devoured like a Christmas trifle before a Boxing Day crowd of 55,167 at Old Trafford, the 39-year-old Southall was parading in front of 5,341 at Brentford's Griffin Park.

Signed on a month's loan by

Southend's Alvin Martin to bring "stature" and "massive presence" to the Second Division club, Southall kept the third-from-bottom Bees at bay until he was stung by 42nd minute goal from Robert Taylor.

By that time his successor in the Everton goal, Thomas Myhre, had been beaten twice by Manchester United, and Southall also had the satisfaction of not being a loser - Régis Coudhaut scoring with 10 min-

utes to go, which left the Shrimpers three places higher than their hosts.

Southall, who is wealthy enough not to have to play out his days in the lower divisions, is keen to go into management. Whether this introduction will have encouraged him to start low remains to be seen. No doubt Southend's regular keeper, Simon Royce, having served a one-match ban, will hope the Premiership bright lights lure the interloper back to Goodison.

Owen and Fowler finish off Leeds

Phil Shaw

Liverpool3
Leeds United1

Everybody can beat everyone else in the Premiership, George Graham declared before Christmas. His own team, Leeds, continue to provide one of the exceptions to the rule when it comes to taking on Liverpool, for whom Michael Owen and Robbie Fowler maintained an extraordinary ascendancy in the fixture yesterday.

Owen, breaking the deadlock 55 seconds into the second half, and Fowler, with two late goals before Alf Inge Haland's reply, consigned Leeds to their customary emphatic defeat at Anfield. They have now won just once in 20 League and Cup visits dating back a quarter of a century to the era of Bill Shankly and Don Revie.

Liverpool, who began 1997 as League leaders, will go into its final game at Newcastle on Sunday lying fourth, 12 points behind Manchester United with a match in hand. While only the wildest dreamers among their fans harbour hopes of the title, the manner in which they eventually overwhelmed Leeds suggested that the runners-up spot and a Champions' League place is not beyond them.

Before a crowd of nearly 44,000 - English football's biggest away from Old Trafford this season - the sides looked evenly matched during the first half. Liverpool had the only genuine chance, when Jason McAteer climaxed a superb, twisting run at the heart of Leeds' defence by haplessly scooping the ball over the bar with only Nigel Martyn to beat.

The course of events changed irrevocably immediately after half-time. Robert Molenar and

David Robertson contrived to jump into one another as they rose to meet Steve Harkness's cross, the ball breaking to Oyvind Leonhardsen. His short pass found Owen charging up in support, and the 18-year-old drove his 10th goal of the season past Martyn from 12 yards.

Liverpool, and Fowler in particular, spurned several chances before sealing Leeds' fate with two goals in quick succession. With 11 minutes remaining and Leeds committed to the quest for an equaliser, a move which started with David James bowling the ball out ended with Steve McManaman playing Fowler in to drive home his first goal from open play since 4 November. His second owed everything to Owen's selflessness. Wriggling past two defenders, he laid the ball across for Fowler to steer home his 11th of the season.

Leeds, for whom Jimmy Hasselbaink and David Hopkin

had shot wide and headed over respectively early in either half, finally scored their second goal in 12 trips to Anfield with six minutes left. Haland, far once leaving McManaman's side, headed in Gary Kelly's free-kick, which meant Graham's team have now scored more goals than they managed all last season.

Roy Evans, savouring three successive League wins for the first time this season, felt it had been a triumph of patience. Could they still catch United? "We need more than three victories on the trot," the Liverpool manager said. "We could do with 23 wins back-to-back to give us a chance."

Liverpool (4-4-2): James; McAteer, Robertson, Molenar, Harkness; McManaman, Ince (Carragher, 88), Harkness (Berges, 88), Leonhardsen, Owen, Fowler (Piedra, 88). Substitutes not used: Babb, Friedel (94).

Leeds United (4-4-2): Martyn; Hala, Withers, Molenar, Robertson; Kelly, Hopkin, Eddowes, Haland; Hasselbaink, Wallace, Sainsbury. Substitutes not used: Bowyer, Kovalev, Lloyd, Maybury, Beesley (94).

Referee: S Lodge (Barnsley).

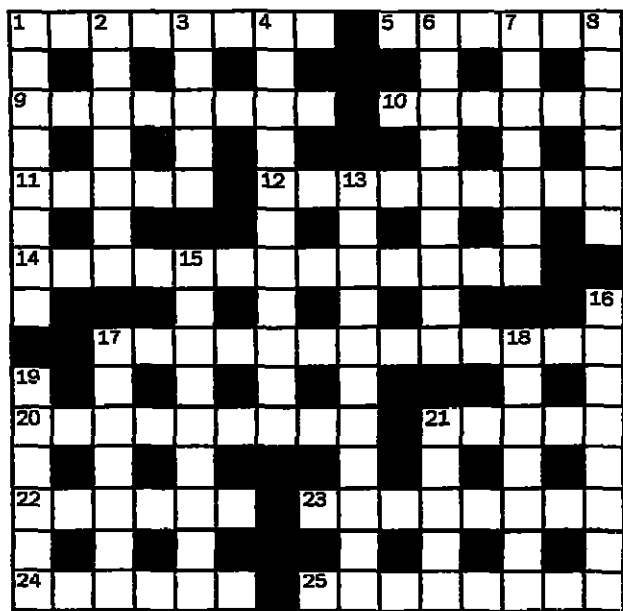
THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3492, Saturday 27 December

By Spasmas

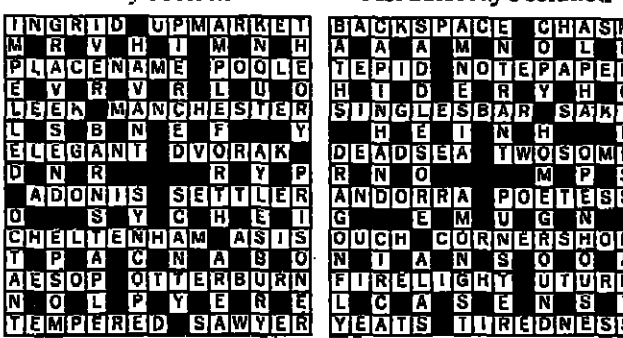
ACROSS

DOWN



Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution



- 1 One will often have a striking exterior (8)
- 5 Unexpected developments produced by winds, perhaps (6)
- 9 Secure or insecure access? (8)
- 10 Some coarseness evidently rejected by member of religious fraternity (6)
- 11 One precious metal found in Middle Eastern idyl? (5)
- 12 Lawyers turning sarcastic, talking incessantly (9)
- 14 Volunteer vigilante presenting paper on London tube station? (8,5)
- 17 Fiddling with computers? Menu items requiring to be processed (7,6)
- 20 Nude and/or dressed? Couldn't be plainer (9)
- 21 Old fellow who'd take the pledge (5)
- 22 Certain amount of pressure facing island optics expert? (6)
- 23 Weighty matters of conscience? (8)
- 24 Indicate desperate need to devour the scriptures (6)
- 25 Concentrate on committee papers (8)
- 1 Membership of union for which formal proposal may be made (8)
- 2 Musical work in two acts, specially adapted? Nothing in that (7)
- 3 Hot and cold running water in Yorkshire home (5)
- 4 Watch what you say (11)
- 6 Crocks in need of attention? (7,2)
- 7 Place is exquisitely distinctive (7)
- 8 Winter transport said to amuse greatly (6)
- 13 Braggart making big car go all over the place, avoiding trouble? (11)
- 15 Whereby the hum becomes subdued? (9)
- 16 Estimates value of old coins oriental vessel carried (8)
- 17 Feature about a Greek leads to embarrassment (7)
- 18 Unravelling of clue interrupted by bad girl (7)
- 19 One prey to nagging doubt may be unsuccessful in auction (6)
- 21 Almost certain to get in at Oxford - that's appropriate (5)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: A Cowper, Swanses; J Maudsley, Wigton; A Wood, Burnley; P Beatty, Stockton-on-Tees; P Harris, Chester.

TODAY
THIRTEEN
PAGES OF
SPORT
BEGIN ON
PAGE 12

ON MONDAY
TWENTY PAGE
SPORT SECTION

Bergkamp, Schmeichel, or Zola?
Will your favourite footballer be
The Independent's top
Premiership player of the Year?

NEXT
WEEK
INDEPENDENT
1998
CALENDAR
OF SPORT
APPEARS
ON
2 JANUARY